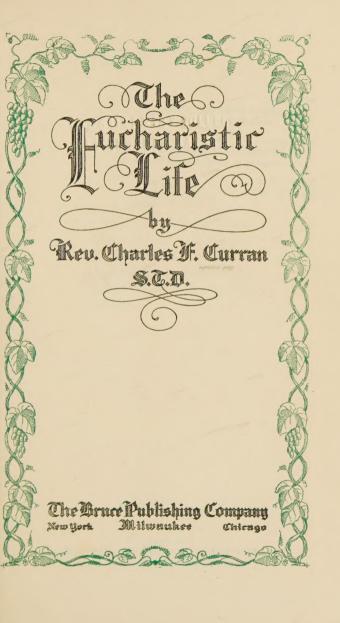




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+ THOMAS O'DONNELL
Coadjutor Archbishop of Halifax

Halifax, N. S. March 25, 1930

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DEDICATION

To the cherished memory of the Father and Mother of a Priest this book is respectfully and gratefully dedicated by their son, the author.



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CHARLES F. CURRAN

Halifax, N. S. March 19, 1930



INTRODUCTION

THE EUCHARISTIC LIFE takes one through the whole day—the whole day of life—in union with Our Blessed Lord in His Most Holy Sacrament. From the very first lines of this practical and beautiful Eucharistic offering, the Blessed Mother walks side by side with her Divine Son encouraging and guiding those who aspire to walk the road of the Eucharistic Life and to follow the Lamb.

Devotion to the Blessed Eucharist is in the spiritual world what the sun is in the natural. No other is more sublime, more salutary, more consoling, more universal, and more necessary. This is the reason Father Faber, quoting almost the words of St. Catharine of Siena, says: "Devotion to the Holy Eucharist is the worship of the living presence of Jesus Christ on earth; and hence it has for its object a greatness, a solemnity, a seal of gravity and truth to which nothing can approach."

This is the sublime idea of The Eucharistic Life. The solidity and beauty of theological basis and structure that upholds and enshrines the devotion to the most Blessed Eucharist, enthralls the mind; and the will is whirled along by the rushing stream of holy thought to the final union with the ocean of love.

Not the least pleasing and instructive section of The Eucharistic Life is the part dedicated to the Holy Communion of children.

We heartily recommend The Eucharistic Life to priests and religious and devout laity. The book is first-class for meditations and spiritual reading.

THOMAS O'DONNELL

September 8, 1929

Coadjutor Archbishop of Halifax.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
	Introduction	ix
79	PART I — The Eucharistic Day	
Chapter	_ ' _	
I.	BEGINNING THE DAY	3
II.	Morning Prayers	11
III.	A MEDITATION	35
IV.	The Mass	47
V.	HOLY COMMUNION	58
VI.	OUR MEALS	69
VII.	Our Work	83
VIII.	Visits	94
IX.	Spiritual Reading	105
X.	THE BOOK OF NATURE	115
XI.	A STROLL THROUGH THE CITY	126
XII.	SICKNESS	137
XIII.	BENEDICTION	146
XIV.	RECREATION	156
XV.	A MEDITATION—CHARITY	166
XVI.	THE VESPER AUDIENCE	177
XVII.	SLEEP	187
PART II — The Communion of Children		
PA.	RI II—Ine Communion of Children	
KVIII.	THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH	201
XIX.	Immature Communions	210
XX.	RETARDED COMMUNIONS	218
XXI.	Frequent Communions	228
XXII.	THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION.	241



Part I The Eucharistic Day



CHAPTER I

BEGINNING THE DAY

V TE OFTEN admire the dazzling heights of sanctity attained by Our Blessed Lady. She alone, of all human souls, realized in herself the ideal designed by Almighty God in our creation. He called us out of nothing in order that we might know, serve, and love Him here on earth, and afterwards, see and enjoy Him forever in Heaven. Mary fulfilled this aim to perfection. Her life was one continuous act of adoration of her Creator. Long before she became the Mother of God, she had been corresponding perfectly to grace and had been continuously advancing in merit. Knowing that God had fashioned the heart of man to love its Maker, Mary transformed her every thought, word, and act into expressions of purest love. From the first moment of consciousness until the last, her life was replete with acts of love. If this were true before the arrival of Jesus, words fail to portray the fervour of love she experienced in His presence.

To be actually living under the same roof with the God of Love was enough to keep her heart enthusiastically pulsating in one constant hymn of love. Nor could it be otherwise. If St. John became the Apostle of love from his intimacy with the Sacred Heart, that burning furnace of love, what are we not to expect from the Mother of Him Who is Charity Itself? Jesus, in fact, became the very soul of Mary's existence. He was constantly in her thoughts. When present, He absorbed her complete attention; when absent, He still dwelt in her mind and in her heart. All her actions were done to please Him. She, indeed, could say that she lived the life of Jesus, or rather, that she did not live, but Jesus lived in her.

This beautiful picture of Mary's soul excites our admiration. But we should not consider it impossible of imitation. True, Our Lady possessed extraordinary gifts by reason of her maternal dignity: nevertheless, she was a creature like ourselves, and what she did, we also can do at least imperfectly. If Jesus became the very soul of Our Lady's life, why should He not occupy a similar place in our own? The same roof oftentimes shelters us both—Jesus in His tabernacle; we in our rooms. We see Him at Mass, hold intimate converse with Him at Communion, come into His Presence during the day; in short, we also, like Our Virgin Queen, live with Jesus. Why then, do we not make Him enter more fully into our lives? What is there to prevent us from making Jesus in the Eucharist the centre of our lives, the sun of our daily acts, the very heart of our existence? We know Jesus thinks of us from dawn to twilight and from twilight unto dawn; from New Year's morn until its following eve. We know, on the other hand, that we are free, that it is in our power to sanctify ourselves, to grace our every act with the sweet aroma of love. Let us, then, put thoughts into words, words into acts, and live "all for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament." Would you like, friend, to pass a day in the shadow of the tabernacle? Would it please you to live with the Eucharist only as your light? If so, come, follow me, and we shall spend a Eucharistic Day.

OUR AWAKENING

It is morning! We are awakened from our slumbers. During the night our thoughts have been stilled in sleep, save for the virtual intention sanctifying our rest. All these hours of necessary quiet bear witness to the animal element of our nature. Our dignity of free, immortal beings manifests itself with our consciousness. We awake then. What shall our first thought be? To whom directed? Somebody is anxiously waiting. Down in His prison cell Jesus is expecting our first act. During those long, silent hours of the night His Heart has ever been palpitating with love for us; He has been thinking about the new day that is to be added to our lives and the portion of it that is to be given to Him. From His tabernacle throne Jesus has prepared treasures of grace to strengthen us for the fresh battle. He is ready to do His share if we will only do ours. So He has waited "till morn," till that first free act, to see how we shall begin our day.

Such is the situation when Christian souls awake. The true lover of Jesus knows what to do. Quicker than it takes time to tell, like a flash of lightning, her heart goes at once to the tabernacle.

"All for Thee, Sacred Heart of Jesus." "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament." *Ecce venio!* "Behold I come to do Thy Will, O Jesus. I offer Thee all my thoughts, words, and acts as a prayer through the Immaculate Heart of Mary, for the intentions of Thy Sacred Heart. I offer Thee all again as a preparation for Holy Mass and Communion."

Such is the beginning of a Eucharistic Day, and a day so auspiciously begun must needs be well blessed by God.

WHILE DRESSING

If circumstances permit, our first act upon leaving our nocturnal couch should be a genuflection in the direction of the tabernacle. God loves "First Fruits," and there is no reason why the faculties of soul and body should not be trained to offer their first acts to their Eucharistic God.

Genuflection made, it behooves us, while arranging our toilet, to prepare for our meeting with Jesus and the subsequent privileges of Mass and Holy Communion. In a short time we shall be admitted into the palace of the King. Let us prepare, then, and prepare well; for such an audience, no preparation can be excessive. Jesus is Purity Itself, Sanctity Itself; therefore, woe to us if we

come without our nuptial garments. But this is not all; we are not only to be admitted to His palace; we have the boldness to expect that within a few hours He will descend into the hovel of our hearts and be there enthroned. O unspeakable privilege! O wondrous opportunity! All these favours in store for us! Then come, let us prepare!

The fire of affection enkindled the preceding day has died out during the night. Heap up fresh faggots on the cold hearth and apply anew the torch of love. Pile high upon the fire fresh logs for the flames—fervent acts of contrition, of humility, of desire, of affection, that the heart we offer to Jesus may resemble as closely as possible the burning furnace of His own Sacred Heart.

"Come, Jesus, come! In a few moments I shall see Thee! soon Thou wilt come into my heart. O Jesus, I have spent the whole night without Thee and my soul longs to be united to Thee. Come, Jesus, come! I have so many things to tell Thee, so many sorrows to communicate to Thee, so many favours to ask of Thee. Come, O Jesus, I am so lonely without Thee; come, make me happy. My soul is hungry for Thee!"

Then as we don our garments we can beg Our Lady to robe us with the robes of grace, with the nuptial vestments of love. Let us unite ourselves to her in her preparation for her meeting with Jesus.

Too much attention cannot be directed to these acts of desire and love early in the morning, as

they form the keynote of our day. The better we prepare, the better shall we assist at Holy Mass and the more shall we profit by our Communion. As we dress, then, let us stir up still further the newly lighted fire in our hearts by repeating over and over again the thrice-blessed invocation: "Praised be the most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!" In addition to warming up our hearts for our loving Saviour, these Eucharistic ejaculations will contribute greatly to give the right orientation to our Eucharistic Day.

GOING TO THE CHAPEL

Our journey to the promised land soon begins. We leave our abode of exile and proceed to the country overflowing with milk and honey, where Jesus is waiting to greet us. On the way we must try to enter into the dispositions of the Heart of Mary as she hastened through the streets of Nazareth, returning to her Jesus. "I am coming Jesus! I am not worthy of this honour! Pardon me for being so cold, so distracted, so preoccupied with sensible things."

As we go along we pass landmark after landmark until we reach the palace door. Without, all is silent. Only a few steps separate us from our God, and our hearts thrill at the thought. 'Tis an important moment! Softly the door opens and we are ushered into the presence of Our King! Ounspeakable favour! We share the privilege of the angels, the honour of the Apostles—we are face to

face with Our God, Our Saviour, Our Redeemer, Our Jesus! God grant that we may know how to profit by such an opportunity!

THE MORNING AUDIENCE

Love and respect here fight for the mastery. Respect for the Divinity of Our Saviour would throw us prostrate and speechless at His feet, but "love casteth out fear," and we hasten to exclaim joyously: "Good morning, Jesus!" Ah, yes! Good morning to Our King! Why not? Is He not alive in the tabernacle? Is He not Our Friend, and is this salutation not common among friends? "Good morning, then, dear Jesus."

When the first outburst of joy has subsided, we make fitting acts of adoration. "May the adorable Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament be known, loved, and adored in all the tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time!" We then forestall the coming wickedness of the day by the following prayer: "Pardon, O Divine Jesus, all the indifference, coldness, and ingratitude that will be shown Thee by Thy creatures today, in this tabernacle and in all the tabernacles of the world."

After this we consecrate to His service for the day, all the faculties of our soul and body: "O my God, I offer Thee my heart to love only Thee; my eyes to behold only Thee, and Thee in all things; my ears to hear for Thee; my body to serve Thee and Thee alone." We also offer Him all our thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings of the

day, begging Him to accept them as the incense of our love floating up unceasingly to His tabernacled Majesty. Nor must we forget to ask Him to pardon in advance our distractions and our forgetfulness of Him during the day. "O Jesus, I long to spend this day with Thee and for Thee. But being so human, I shall perhaps soon forget Thee. Pardon, then, my coming distractions and my forgetfulness. The spirit, O Lord, is willing, but the flesh is weak. Would that I could think of Thee at every moment of this day! Would that I could constantly love Thee! O grant, dear Jesus, that during this day and during my whole life, my heart may belong to Thee and Thee alone!"

CHAPTER II

MORNING PRAYERS

AFTER our first morning greetings have been exchanged, we begin the recitation of our morning prayers.

Prayer is an elevation of the soul to God, in which we speak to Him, offer Him our duties of adoration, thanksgiving, and reparation, and at the same time make supplication for our temporal and spiritual needs.

Prayers can be offered up at all times and in all places, but they are most efficacious and pleasing to God when offered in our churches and chapels, which replace the temple of old, designated by God as the "House of Prayer." Moreover, no place is more naturally conducive to prayer than the church. There the soul easily raises itself to God; everything about the edifice—kneeling benches, pictures, statues, and, above all, the altar and the tabernacle—speaks to the soul of God and almost unconsciously allures it to unite itself to Him. Thus it is that the Christian soul relishes in a special manner prayers said in the church, and particularly before the altar.

Christianity has consecrated special forms of prayer. Some of these, coming to us directly from God, have already passed the censorship of Heaven, and have been incorporated into the life of the Church. Such are the "Our Father" and the "Hail Mary." For beauty and sublimity of thought,

simplicity of diction, conciseness of expression, comprehensive enumeration of our duties to God and Our Blessed Lady, and of our own personal needs, no prayer can be compared with these.

Hence, these prayers enter into our morning salutations to God. We repeat them day after day in the House of God, but unfortunately we do not always derive from our prayers before the altar the special profit latent in them. Our thoughts usually soar with our words, traveling to Heaven to the presence of the glorified God, while all the time we are within a few feet of that same God, and we do not think of addressing our prayer to God in His terrestrial Heaven. We commit no irreverence, it is true, by praying to God in Heaven: but in point of fact, if the Eucharist be a reality, is it not more becoming to direct our prayers to the tabernacle? What would be thought of a contemporary of Christ, who, while professing belief in His Divinity, would not think of speaking to Him personally? Would he not be accused of dullness of understanding in not attempting to profit by the grand opportunity within his grasp? So it is with us when we pray before the tabernacle. We believe that Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, is in the tabernacle, and, nevertheless, we transfer our attention to God in Heaven, giving to the God of the tabernacle only the outward marks of devotion and respect. For the future let us think more of Our God of the tabernacle, and let us concentrate our thoughts on Him while our lips move in prayer. Let us now begin our prayers in keeping with the Eucharistic spirit.

"OUR FATHER"

"Our Father!" The Eucharist is Our Father in the order of grace. In it are concealed the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity-The Father Who created us, the Son Who redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost Who sanctified us. We are generated, clothed, nourished, and educated in the order of grace by these three Persons Who dwell in our tabernacle prisons. Why deny the Eucharist the appellation, "Father"? The grace of baptism flows from its Fountain Head, Christ, Who impersonated the Eucharist. By baptism, we are born children of God, brothers of Christ, heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. The minister of this sacrament invokes the regenerating grace in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and by the power of these names we are elevated to the supernatural state, become sharers in the prerogatives of God, and claim kinship with Jesus Christ. Generation, be it carnal or spiritual, requires a father. In the Eucharist we are spiritually generated by these three same Persons. Hence, looking towards the golden door of the altar we can truthfully say, "Our Father."

Once born, we have to be properly cradled, nourished, and educated. These offices of the spir-

itual order are exercised in more than one way by the Eucharist. Christ in the tabernacle does not sacrifice His prerogative as the Author of grace; consequently, every time we kneel at the mystic cross during Holy Mass and the waters of redemption flood our souls; every time the priest places a Host, laden with an infinity of spiritual blessings, upon our tongues; every time we seek the refreshing shade of the sanctuary and the Divine breezes bring consolation to our parched and fevered hearts-in all these cases Jesus in the tabernacle strengthens the claims He has to be our spiritual Father. His grace bedecks our souls in robes of supernatural beauty: He feeds us with food denied even to the angels; and instructs us little by little in the wondrous ways of God.

"Who Art In Heaven"

What is Heaven? The answer so familiar to the walls of the Sunday School says: "Heaven is the kingdom of God's glory and of His angels and saints." Heaven is the abode of God, where He manifests Himself to the blessed. But the Eucharist contains God, glorious, immortal, infinite; consequently, Heaven is in the Eucharist in the same way that Christ is there; that is, in a spiritual, substantial way. There are so many hidden treasures in this Divine gift of God that the more we seek, the more we find. How often, indeed, have we not felt, while reclining on the Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist, as if earth with all its cares had glided

away from us and we were already with God drinking in the delights of His happy home? The Eucharist for us is a foretaste of future joys, the veiled reflection of life beyond the grave.

"HALLOWED BE THY NAME!"

In these words we pray that the Name of God be held as sacred by the children of men; that is, according to authorized biblical rules, that God Himself be venerated as sacred. This translates itself into action by knowing, loving, and serving God. When said before the altar, our prayer should resolve itself Eucharistically; that is, we ought to pray that the God of our altars be known, loved, and served by His millions of men. May He be thus honoured at Holy Mass and Communion and in visits to the Blessed Sacrament! Oh! if men would but sanctify His sacramental Name in this manner, what praise and glory would He not receive and how happy would not men become! Yes, hallowed be Thy Eucharistic Name!

"THY KINGDOM COME!"

Christ is King, although His kingdom is not of this world. The Eucharist is a world all by itself, a world where Christ reigns in glorious sway; but, unfortunately, those who are of the outside refuse to acknowledge such power. For non-Catholics, the Eucharist is an illusion. We pray, then, that their eyes may be opened to the light and that they may be able to rank themselves among the subjects of

the Tabernacle King. Even for Catholics in regrettable millions, Christ in the Eucharist is as if He were not. They do not want the Blessed Sacrament to dominate over their lives. Such jurisdiction frightens them; they know it would entail the sacrifice of many pleasures, the mortification of several cherished satisfactions. Let us pray that our loyalty be strengthened and the Eucharistic Kingdom of Christ extended, magnified, and rendered glorious throughout the whole world, so that Christ, from the Eucharist and by the Eucharist, may rule all souls. Thy Kingdom Come!

"THY WILL BE DONE!"

The Will of God! The behest of the Almighty, which is the expression of His infinite mind in regard to the doings of His creatures. May it be done; that is, obeyed, observed, and put into practise by all His creatures.

His Will is made known to us nowadays by His infallible spouse, the Church, who, acting under His inspiring directions, reveals His messages to the faithful. Reciting this invocation before the tabernacle, we can recall to mind the invitations of the Church bidding the faithful assist frequently at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, partake as often as possible of the angelic banquet, and finally, honour the Real Presence by occasional visits.

Oh! were the Will of God done in regard to frequent communion, what a transformation would take place in the Catholic world! Imagine a whole

generation of little angelic children nourished with daily communion, reared on the Divine Food, their lives moulded on the virtues of the Sacred Heart! And were they to continue this salutary practise during their youth, what a moral influence they would exert upon their contemporaries! And if daily communion continued to be an essential element of their everyday life, who could begin to enumerate the advantages which would accrue to society! Let us pray fervently that the scales of prejudice may fall from the eyes of Catholics, and that they may revert to the fervour of the early Christians and frequently approach the breakfast table of God. May His Eucharistic Will be done!

"ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN!"

This clause but refers to the perfect fulfiling of God's holy Will. As it is in Heaven; that is, completely, integrally, promptly, without one discordant note. In Heaven God reigns with undisputed sway. His wishes are commands; His commands are no sooner uttered than executed. If this clockwork obedience were only obtainable on earth, life would abound with celestial blessings and would foreshadow for us the bliss of our future home. May, then, the wishes of the Church in regard to the Blessed Sacrament be as loyally obeyed as the desires of Christ are in Heaven!

We now pass to the second part of the Lord's Prayer. The petitions of the first part relate more to the rights of God than to the wants of creatures. Those of the second part embrace the direct needs of souls.

"GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD!"

The prayer composed by the Author of life could not but include the most essential need of man, a creature composed of body and soul. And what can be considered his most essential need if not that which sustains the life of body and soul? This is nothing less than food, for without food the body cannot survive. Food, however, is usually typified for us under the name "bread," this being the most widely known means of sustenance. We pray, therefore, for bread for our bodies. As we utter this request before the altar, let us remember that Jesus in the tabernacle is our benefactor even in the natural order; and consequently, if we wish to be fed, clothed, and housed, it is from Jesus and through Jesus these benefits are to come. Proper appreciation and understanding of this very evident fact, manifested by a direct petition to Our Blessed Lord, will increase our chances of being more materially enriched.

In this petition the spiritual needs of our souls are also included. We are taught to labour not only "for the meat that perisheth, but also for that which endureth unto life everlasting." This meat of our souls is Holy Communion. Consequently, in this prayer we beg of God the grace of a Communion for the day.

Special attention must be directed to this clause embracing, as it does, a desire for the coming of the Master. "Give us this day our daily bread," the true food of our souls; give us Thy own dear Self of Whom we are so much in need; give us the force that will make us strong in temptation and rich in virtue; give us the light that will enable us to live for Thee, and the love which will enable us to do all things for Thee. Grant also that this day may be a Eucharistic Day, a day centred around Thy tabernacle, guided by Thy light, and spent entirely for Thee and with Thee."

"Forgive Us Our Trespasses!"

Sin, without doubt, is the great humiliating feature of our lives. Nothing else shows up our weakness, our incapacity for good, the fickleness of our vacillating human nature, as sin does. For our sins, then, we must needs ask pardon of God. But as we pray for forgiveness before our imprisoned God of the altar, let us recall in a special manner our tabernacle sins. Oh, their number is legion! We have often noted the effect of a shaft of bright light striking athwart a darkened room. Myriads of hitherto invisible dust atoms suddenly become visible. We thought we were pious, perhaps, but let us stand for a moment in the bright light of our obligations to Jesus in the tabernacle, and what a spectacle meets our gaze! How quickly our alleged goodness vanishes at the sight of our numberless tabernacle imperfections, failings, and faults that loom up before us! Sins of ill-prepared, irreverent communions, scandalously short thanksgivings and-oh, horror! we shrink from the thought-perhaps, sacrilegious betrayals, when in days of youth, we received the God of Love into hearts defiled with mortal sin. Then that woeful tale of neglect toward the Divine Prisoner; those times when we could so easily have come to see Him and failed to do so; those entire days spent without one single thought of Him, or, if we did think, to throw the thought of Him aside, preferring ease and pleasure to the company of a God! "Oh! forgive us our trespasses, hidden God; forgive our past indifference, our past ingratitude! We were blind to Your endeavours to hold converse with us. Forgive us our tabernacle trespasses!"

"As We Forgive Those Who Trespass Against Us!"

It is not without hidden confusion that we add this remark. We ask God to pardon us just as we pardon our enemies. May He not take us too strictly at our word? If His forgiveness is to be measured by our hard, unforgiving, never-forgetting policy, have we not good reason to think it will fare badly with many of us?

"LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION!"

"O Captive God, we beg Thee to protect us this day from temptations to desert Thee, to leave Thee

alone, to offend Thee by forgetting Thee, Thy love, Thy sacrifice. Save us from any deliberate irreverence against Thee. Keep us from excessive love of self, of our own satisfaction. Chain our hearts to Thee and Thee alone, and make us love all things in Thee. O Jesus, let not today be as yesterday, when I made such a poor Communion, assisted so distractedly at Mass, and for the rest of the day thought so rarely of Thee. I beg of Thee the grace to think of Thee today at all times, at all places, in all my occupations. Aught that may separate me from Thee will be a temptation; so, dear Master, lead me not into temptation."

"BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL! AMEN"

Our concluding petition is that we be preserved from all evil, both temporal and spiritual. "O dear, imprisoned Master, deliver us from all physical evil that would in any way deprive us of Thee - prolonged sickness which would rob us of the priceless boon of assisting at Thy mystic Calvary and condemn us to spiritual starvation through not being able to be fed with Thy Body; or, again, the passing of a period of our life in spiritual darkness occasioned by the absence of our Tabernacle Sun. From this evil, O Jesus, deliver us. Much rather allow us to die suddenly after a short sickness than live so close to Thee without Thee, starving in the midst of plenty, living like bats in gloom when the rest of the world is bathed in the sunshine of the Real Presence.

Then, Master, grant that sin, the only evil, be not our lot today. With St. Philip Neri we beseech Thee not to permit us to enlarge the wound in Thy Sacred Heart. We have done so too often in the past, as those dark blotches on our souls so sadly testify; but for the future at least, O Infinite God, never permit us to wound Thee, offend Thee, sadden Thee, by even one deliberate mortal sin. O Master, preserve us from such a crime! How could we ever look Thee in the face again at Communion or at Benediction if we knew we had, after all Thy kindness, deliberately, cold-bloodedly, offended Thee by mortal sin? Dear Master, if Thou lovest us, spare us, spare us, we beseech Thee. Oh! a thousand times instant death, even death at this very moment, while the music of Thy grace yet sings in our hearts, than live to kill Thee by mortal sin. Deliver us, we implore Thee, from all evil, both temporal and spiritual. Amen.

"HAIL MARY"

After the "Our Father," no prayer possesses such qualities for Eucharistic meditation as the "Hail Mary." Particular interest attaches itself to this most beautiful prayer by reason of its divine origin, and also because of its being the favourite spiritual message of millions. From early morn until late at night, from one corner of the globe to the other, billions and trillions of messages of love are carried aloft to the Heavenly Queen on the wings of this

angelic salutation. A great part of these prayers are said at home, but countless millions are also said at the foot of the tabernacle.

All places can serve as thrones from which to offer Our Lady's greeting, but no place can compare with the foot of the altar. There, within a few feet of us, Mary's Son listens to the prayer that brought Him into the world; and there Mary's Son is more propitious than ever to the requests made Him in His Mother's name. Let us then recite the "Hail Mary" in company with Jesus, lingering lovingly over every honeyed word, to consider the relations between it and the tabernacle.

"HAIL MARY"

As our lips pronounce the opening words of the great Marian hymn, do we not imagine ourselves back in Nazareth, listening to the Angel Gabriel saluting the Queen of Heaven and earth? In those words we discern the first glimmer of the Eucharistic light. It is the herald going before to announce the arrival of the Tabernacle Sun. "Hail Mary!"

Let us join with the angel in offering the greatest possible reverence to this glorious Creature, by means of whom we possess Heaven's richest treasure, Jesus in the Sacrament of His Love. Let us learn to pronounce these opening words with some of the respect, the reverence, and the awe that filled the Blessed Archangel Gabriel, when, for the first time on earth, he uttered the words that will con-

tinue to gladden mankind until the consummation of time.

Without Mary our life would have been one dreary waste; one hungry existence; one cold, cheerless outlook. Without Our Blessed Lady we would have been obliged to trudge over the desert of life without ever stopping in the comforting shade of Our Eucharistic Oasis; forced like prodigal sons to feed on the husks of swine instead of banqueting at the table of the gods; confined to prison walls of mud and clay, instead of revelling in a paradise of Eucharistic beauty, lit up by the Tabernacle Sun.

"Hail! then, O aurora of the Tabernacle Sun! Hail, generous benefactress of the richest gift we possess! Hail! O Mother of the God of our hearts!"

"FULL OF GRACE"

Full of grace! Do we understand what this means? After a fervent Communion, when the Author and Source of all grace is replenishing every nook and cranny of our hearts, we perceive in some slight degree what it means to advance in grace; but to be "full of grace," to have as much of that supernatural gift as our souls can support or God intends to grant us—this indeed is above us. Yet this was the favour vouchsafed Our Lady even before she had made her first Communion. If she was "full of grace" when the messenger of God brought

her the tidings of her wonderful Divine Maternity, what must have become the plentitude of that grace in Mary's heart during her first long Communion of nine months, and during that ineffable union which extended through the thirty-three years of life on earth? And what shall we say of the waves of grace that swept over her soul when, after the institution of the Eucharist, Our Blessed Lady relived her Divine Maternity by receiving Holy Communion?

Indeed we may well salute her as "full of grace." and full of Eucharistic Grace. It would be presumption; it would savour of heresy; it would amount to insult, to think of her having wasted the slightest Eucharistic Grace. She, who always obeyed the inspirations of God, could not have cast a shadow over her declining years by losing any treasure of the tabernacle. No, Our Lady was full of Eucharistic Grace; and this is precisely the reason why we sinful, ungrateful creatures should plead with her to pray for us to her Eucharistic Son. We also, according to our state, could have been full of grace, but, sad to state, we are not. That we are not, is not the fault of God, but of ourselves-we refuse God's advances. We steel our hearts against falling too much in love with the Eucharist. We have not the courage to sacrifice our time, our conveniences, or our pleasure, in order to make this visit, perform this act of love, or prepare more fervently for our Communion. Oh, yes, we need Mary's help.

"Hail, full of Eucharistic Grace! We miserable, ungenerous creatures salute thee! Hail, generous, loving Mother! Permit us, all unworthy though we be, to address thee!"

"THE LORD IS WITH THEE!"

"Jesus is with thee!" Yes, we cannot but admit so evident a fact. The Master is with Our Blessed Lady in a most special manner. He is with her to protect her, to assist her, to stand guarantee for her actions. Jesus is with His Mother in all things. Before He came as Jesus, He, as God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, was with Mary. On earth He was with her until His death; dying, He still remained with her in the Eucharist. Even absent from His presence, Mary was with Jesus and Jesus with Mary, for the Eucharist to Our Blessed Lady was the prolongation of the Incarnation, the continued participation in the home joys of the humble cottage at Nazareth, where all her world was centred in Jesus.

"Because the Lord is with thee, O fair Queen, thou must be powerful in His sight. Thy word with thy Son, dear Mother, is equivalent to a command. O Mary, Queen of the Tabernacle Sun, we pray to thee; listen to our salutation, graciously deign to receive our veneration."

"Blessed Art Thou Among Women"

St. Elizabeth, in uttering these words, summed

up the opinion of all centuries. "Blessed among women," that is, Mary outshone all the daughters of Eve as the woman above all women singularly privileged and blessed. She alone, of all strictly human creatures, was conceived in a state of innocence; she alone loved God with her whole heart; she alone merited, as far as a human being could merit, the inestimable favour of being chosen Mother of God. Truly, then, Mary deserved her title; but as we reverently contemplate her exalted dignity, must we not realize that all her greatness is to be traced to Jesus? Because she was to be His Mother, her heart from all eternity had to be made in every respect worthy of a Son-God; because she was to be His first tabernacle, the grace of the Immaculate Conception followed as an inseparable birthright. And now, as we bow in awe before her preëminent dignity, her marvellous sanctity, her tremendous power, do we not see that Mary is great, holy, and powerful, because she was what she was to Jesus, and Jesus was what He was to her?

So also can it be in a lesser degree with us; we can advance in dignity, in sanctity, in power, in the measure that we allow ourselves to come into close contact and intimate union with Jesus. No soul is truly great, holy, or powerful except by reason of its union with God. The more we unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, the epitome of dignity, sanctity, and power, the more also do we participate in His qualities. Thus, each attendance at the Holy Sacrifice, each reception of Communion, each visit to

Our Lord, brings Jesus with His dignity, goodness, and power closer and closer to our hearts, until slowly but surely we bid farewell to our nothingness, weakness, and malice, and become merged into a new being with Him Who is all holy and great and powerful. In other words, the more we live by Jesus in the Eucharist, the more will Jesus live in us; and living in us, He will communicate to us His attributes. Let us then take as a general resolution for our Eucharistic devotion, to strive very earnestly to increase in Eucharistic knowledge and love, and make a better use of the boundless treasure of the Blessed Sacrament.

"Blessed Is The Fruit Of Thy Womb, Jesus!"

All honour to Mary's Son, Jesus, in the Eucharist! Ah, indeed He is deserving of praise, of glory, of adoration. To Him we owe undivided support, unstinted service, and unlimited love. Blessed be Jesus in the Sacrament of His Love! "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!"

We are so stingy at times in our dealings with God! We are eager and ready to accept all, but loath to give much in return. Let us not deny Him rightful praise. In consequence, why not make it one of the grand ambitions of our lives to make the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament the centre of all? "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus!"

Oh, if we would only contribute to this blessed work, what glory God would receive, and how happy we should be during all eternity! Lead the world to Jesus in the Eucharist; make the Eucharist lead all souls to God; have the Heart of Jesus honoured in the Sacrament of love; and your name will be inscribed in letters of gold upon the Heart of Our Saviour. "Blessed is the Fruit of thy Womb."

Another duty is suggested by those sweet words of the "Hail Mary," namely, that of giving souls to Jesus. As Mary gave Jesus to souls, so we, in turn, each one in his own way, must try to give souls to Jesus. Let us strive, therefore, to win souls to Him, to mould them to His image and likeness, to develop in them His life and His virtues, so that of us also, as of Mary, it can be said: "Blessed is the fruit of thy labours," namely, the good Christians who have been sanctified by our work.

"HOLY MARY"

"Holy Mary!" Ah! Yes, Our Lady is holy; she breaths forth sanctity—holy in thought, in word, in action. The perfume of Divine sanctity hallows the atmosphere that is privileged to envelop her. She is holy because she did not live of herself or for herself, but of Jesus and for Jesus. He was her "all in all," the centre of her life. Doing everything as she did, for His glory, out of love for Him, sin became horrible, detestable, and suicidal to her: Doing all things to please Him, virtue became the

golden aim of her life, the loadstone of her ambition, the one thing worth living for. So we also can become holy in proportion to the place we give Jesus in our lives. If He becomes all in all to us, if we seek His good pleasure in all things, the likeness of Jesus, by a process of insensible transformation, will be chiselled into us, and one day we shall be surprised to find that we are less wicked than we formerly were.

"MOTHER OF GOD!"

Mother of God! What an inspiration for the prayer soon to follow! "Mary, Mother of the Tabernacle God; Mother of that powerful Being Who created the world, commanding creatures to come forth from nothingness; Mother of the Christ, Our Redeemer, Our Saviour!" Oh, what a position to occupy, and what power must she not wield over the Heart of her Divine Son!

"O Mary, Mother of Jesus, surely no request made by thee will be ignored; surely Jesus will not refuse to grant thy petitions. O Mary, Mother of my Jesus, Mother of my Mass, my Communion! Mary, listen to what we are about to say."

"Pray For Us!"

"Pray for us!" Yes, Mother, pray for us; become our intercessor, our mediator before thy Son in Heaven; plead with Him for forgiveness; beg Him to grant our petitions; importune thy Son until He accedes to our request. O Mother, is not

this thy office, to pray for us! Is it not true that for this thou wast born—to mother Jesus and to mother us? Now we, thy children, are in need; we beg this favour; we desire this grace. We dare not approach Jesus of ourselves; so, Mother, we have recourse to thee. Jesus loves thee. Jesus desires to please thee. Ask Him, then, as a favour to thy own dear self, to grant what we, thy children, so ardently desire."

"For Us Sinners!"

"O Immaculate Queen, despise us not. We are sinners, stained and besmirched with vice; we are beggars, wandering about in the filthy rags of our poverty. Thou art all fair in virtue. In thy immaculate robes thou art resplendent as the morning star. Please do not despise us, Mother, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us to the great God, thy Son, Who did not hesitate to shed the last drop of His precious Blood for our salvation. Pray for us sinners, for our sins keep us from God; our sins make us displeasing in His sight; they mount up like disagreeable, disgusting clouds before His face and turn His Heart against us. O Mary, God loves thee; God delights in thy sanctity. Take advantage of thy purity to plead for thy spiritual offspring. Pray for us sinners!"

"Now!"

"Now," Mother! it is now we ask you to pray for us to Jesus, that we may see Him as He truly is. Mother, you remember, when on earth, the times you looked at Jesus and loved Him. You remember, Lady, how happy you were with Him. Mother, thy Son lives with us, but we are blind; we cannot see Him in His beauty, in His power, in His grace. Pray that our eyes be opened to the wealth of grace contained in the Eucharist. Pray for us now before it is too late, that we may appreciate the ineffable sacrifice of the Mass, the tremendous privilege of Communion, the grand opportunity offered us by Our Tabernacle Friend. Pray for us now, Mother, that this Mass which we have today may be to us what it is to thee, a Calvary of wonderful reality. O Holy Mother, remove the scales from our eyes; reveal to us the value, the actuality of the morning sacrifice, that we may become more and more convinced of the Real Presence of Christ upon our altars; of His loving eagerness to offer Himself a Victim for us, and of the unspeakable act of Divine Immolation He accomplishes for us. O Mother, if we could only realize, as you do, what this Mass means, how many blessings should we not receive! Pray for us now, that we may understand the Divine Sacrifice, and that, understanding it, we may profit by every succeeding Mass to grow more passionately in love with the royal Victim of Calvary!

"Mother, we must also confess that we do not yet understand the rôle Communion should play in our lives. We are like babes wandering through the forest of life, not knowing what road to take. Teach us, Mother, how to make our Communions more helpful to our souls, and how to receive thy Son today. Teach us how to prepare for Him, how to desire Him, how to embrace Him. Mother, thy Communions were flowers of beauty, stars of perfection, gems of love. As we admit our poor, tepid, imperfect Communions, O Mother, pray for us, that the visits of Jesus may prove of greater benefit to our needy souls.

"And now, Lady, one last request before the appeal for our deathbed. Lady, please help us to recognize, to love, and to treat Jesus, living in our tabernacle, as Our Friend. Mother, earth to you was Heaven, for Jesus was your Companion; He was your Sunshine, your Air, your Food, your best and most inseparable Friend. Mother, earth would be Heaven to us also if we could only make the Eucharist enter fully into our daily life. Christ is there—we know it: Christ loves us, wishes to be loved by us—we feel it, and yet, in spite of all this, we live as if He were far away from us, and earth, instead of being paradise, is often a garden of Gethsemane. Mary, pray for us now that the clouds may break and that the shining sun of faith may reveal to us the beauty, the happiness, and the worth of life lived within the circle of the sanctuary lamp."

"Pray For Us At The Hour Of Our Death!"

"Mother, we now make our last appeal; it is for thy assistance at the hour of our death. Mary, of what avail would be a lifetime of Eucharistic feryour if we died enemies of Our Tabernacle God? Of what account all our Masses, our Communions, our visits, if on the Day of Judgment we were found wanting? They would only stand out to reproach, accuse, and condemn us. O Mary, our archenemy will redouble his zeal at that dread moment; so pray for us. We are the friends of Jesus, and His friends we wish ever to remain. We were ransomed by His Blood, we are fed with His Body, we live in His Presence. Thou art His Mother, His dearly Beloved; and thou art also our Mother. Pray for us, then, at the hour of death, so that, having passed safely through the valley of time, we may be forever united to thee and Jesus in a happy eternity! Amen."

CHAPTER III

A MEDITATION

THE CHILD CHRIST

A MOST important item of a well-regulated Christian life is Meditation. Meditation is one of the surest ways of securing admittance to the privileged circle of God's intimate friends. Those who are strangers to it are strangers to the great inner world of recollection, where the soul comes into contact with God, sees supernatural truths and mysteries in new light, and finds help to discern her faults and to advance with renewed ardour on the way to Christian Perfection.

Meditation can be profitably made in all places, but no spot is so conducive to quiet recollection, easy and fruitful reflection, as the sanctuary. There the God of the tabernacle seems to delight in the presence of the soul and to take special pains to draw it to Himself. He fills it with a sense of His infinity and its own nothingness; He reveals to it, one by one, the secrets of His love and the marvels He has accomplished for it; He discovers again and again to the soul new virtues to be practised, and causes new springs of affection to gush forth to water new ambitions for the acquisition of those virtues.

The life of Our Saviour abounds in subject matter for spiritual reflection. Indeed, one of the main purposes of the Incarnation was to give mankind

an opportunity of beholding the Personification of virtue in daily action. The Master told His disciples that He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life; from which follows the obligation of examining the manner in which He practised this virtue, conducted Himself in that mystery, or in other incidents of His Palestinian career. The unlimited resources of the Eucharist help us immeasurably in these considerations. This marvellous Sacrament is an eloquent, unfailing exponent of Our Saviour's teaching. From it, as from a pulpit, the Master propounds the truths of Eternal Life to the ceaseless flow of human beings who during the centuries pass by on their way to the next world. Again, it may be said that in the Eucharist we have a perfect panorama of the life of Our Saviour. One by one the different biblical scenes are reënacted before us-the nativity, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the sacrifice of Calvary—each teaching us its invaluable lesson, then disappearing to make room for another.

To meditate before the tabernacle, then, is an invitation to make every meditation Eucharistic. We do not purpose giving an exhaustive exemplification of such meditations, but we shall content ourselves with illustrating a mystery and a virtue, endeavouring to dramatize them in true Eucharistic form, and shall leave to the pensive spectator the task of similarily arranging other mysteries and virtues.

For our meditation this time we select haphazard-

ly, one of the many charming events that the evangelists signal in the life of Our Lord. We go back in thought to the joyful encounter, after three days of separation, of Jesus and His parents, when the three return to their happy home in Nazareth. St. Luke concisely sums up the doings of the Child Christ at this time; "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." (Luke ii. 51.)

In these brief but comprehensive words, we obtain a glimpse into the precincts of the happiest of homes, and an idea of the life of the Divine Child. To help us in our meditation no less a Person than Christ Himself generously consents to teach, by living pictures, the lessons of His early life. To witness this wonderful portrayal, we are invited to come before the great altar stage where Our Saviour, by means of the Eucharist, will dramatize His life as a boy.

Before the curtain rises we are warned that our sight must be illumined by Faith; our hearts filled with ardent Charity; otherwise, we are likely to depart as unenlightened as before. An Act of Faith, then, is in order. "O my Saviour, King, I firmly believe that the Blessed Sacrament is a living memorial of Thy whole life. O Jesus, give me the grace to see in this truly entrancing Sacrament Thy life as a child, and seeing, increase my love for Thee. Mary, Queen of the home at Nazareth, as-

sist me in studying the life of thy only beloved Son."

These preliminaries having been completed, we turn our eyes towards the stage. We notice how skillfully all the architectural lines of the edifice converge towards the little cottage on the altar. In this cottage, called the "tabernacle," is the leading Actor of today's drama. St. Joseph is represented by the priest, the custodian of the Eucharistic Child. The part of Our Lady is symbolized by Holy Mother Church. After the customary religious services at the temple, the priest departs to his home. Only a short while afterwards he perceives that the Divine Child is not with him. In the excitement of his work he forgot about Christ. Suddenly realizing his lack of thought, he begins to seek the Lord of all. Back to the temple he goes, and there, in the midst of the doctors, he sees Jesus hearing all who speak to Him, and answering their questions. The doctors of the law, men rich in knowledge, experienced in business, deluge the Divine Child with questions, and all receive answers that satisfy, that console, that go straight to the heart. The Child is about His Father's business. that of saving, of sanctifying souls. From the time of His first entering the temple until that of the final visit of the last Eucharistic Adorer, Christ will ever be about His Father's business. With St. Joseph, let us bewail our loss at not having Jesus always physically with us. His true home here on earth is the tabernacle. There He awaits us, prepared to listen to our childish prattle, answer our questions, and grant our requests. We ought at least confess our sorrow at having lost the sense of His presence.

"O Divine Child, pardon me for having lost Thee. For hours plunged in work, I forgot all about Thee; not one thought of love, not one glance in the direction of the tabernacle. Now sorrowing, I come before Thee. Do Thy Father's work; pardon my sin; give me the grace of more perfect union with Thee."

We thought we lost Him, but no, He is there; He is ours; He will not be taken away from us. O what joy! "Angels in Heaven, we do not envy you. We have Heaven right here. The same Christ Who is the joy of your beatific vision is with us. We are going to live with Him. We lost Him through sin, through inattention, but He is found again, and now we intend to live with Him. He will come and be subject to St. Joseph, the priest, and will do His bidding. O what a prospect stretches out before us! Angels, help us to make the most of our little Nazareth, so that one day we may be able to exchange it for your Nazareth which is Heaven!"

POINT I. JESUS AT WORK

In the home of the Holy Family at Nazareth the time was well spent: St. Joseph attended to the duties of his trade, Our Lady to those of the household, and the Child Jesus assisted both in many little ways. When His tasks were done, He enjoved a little innocent recreation. What a touching picture the Child Jesus, helping His mother and His foster father, must have made! It must have been so then, for it is so now. Before the altar we are again at Nazareth. St. Joseph, the priest, has gone to his work of repairing broken-down souls, while Jesus stays at the cottage to accomplish the various duties of the sanctuary. His work is ever His Father's business, converting the sinner, encouraging the struggling, blessing the children, curing the sick, and sanctifying the just. See how His program is carried out. He works tirelessly at Holy Communion. He comes out of the house, goes up and down the main street of Nazareth, which is the altar rail, and gives the Bread of Life to all who care to receive It. Sometimes He is tired, not so much from overwork as from heartache at the thought of all the absent ones, the ones for whom He longs but who do not care to come and be fed. It is sad to see the Divine Child disappointed. He waits and looks in vain for His friends, but they have other loves; they sleep in bed; they fritter away their evenings in vain amusements; they begrudge the distance, and care nothing for a disappointed Christ.

"Divine Child, we wish to make reparation for this ingratitude. We desire to receive Thee fervently, with hearts full of compassion, so that, as Thy Mother consoled Thee with her embraces, we also may make up in some way for the ungrateful conduct of the inhabitants of the modern Nazareth."

"We should like to see Jesus!" Such is the demand made by visitors to Mother Church. "Wait an instant, I will tell Him," she answers. Then, when the altar is prepared, St. Joseph leads out the Child by the hand, places Him on the veranda of Exposition, where, encircled by lights, He sweetly smiles His welcome to all who visit Him.

We cannot but admire the kindness and generosity of the Divine Infant. Jesus does so much for us and does it so quietly and lovingly that we should have hearts of stone not to love Him. Do we truly appreciate all that He does for us in the tabernacle? Think of the long hours spent there for our sakes-the days and the weeks and the months and the years, from the year 33 until the last day of the world. Imagine what an unceasing volume of prayer has been silently going up to Heaven during all this time for us. Yet, in spite of it all, we actually begrudge a little time spent with Him. If we condescend to give Him a few moments, we think we have done much. We refuse to be generous with the Author of time. How pitiable! With Him Who has made Himself a prisoner for all time for us! How pitiable!

"O Child Jesus, forgive us for our blindness. We are unmindful of all Thy kindness. Thou hast a lifelong work with us. Be patient, Jesus, and lead

us; direct us; teach us to recognize Thy worth, the place Thou shouldst occupy in our hearts, our lives, and perhaps one day Thou wilt be more pleased with us."

The Divine Child smiles His benediction upon us. St. Joseph leads Him back to the Cottage, the door closes upon Him, and we depart to our homes, filled with the love of a darling Eucharistic Christ.

POINT II. THE CHILD CHRIST AND HIS MOTHER

Another scene often witnessed at Nazareth was that of the Child Christ with His Mother. How they loved each other-Jesus and Mary! Jesus saw in His Mother the most beautiful daughter of Eve. the fairest exponent of Christian development, the most devoted of Mothers. Mary beheld in Jesus the Masterpiece of Created Beings, the embodiment of the most perfect and most wonderful gifts of nature. In addition to this she knew He was God, and as God, possessor of the plentitude of Divine attributes. This, added to the knowledge that He was her Son, made Mary the happiest of Mothers, and the most devoted of creatures. They loved each other dearly, and every new incident in their lives fanned into flame their already fervent devotion. What a beautiful picture they must have made for the passer-by at Nazareth-nature and grace in their grandest Masterpieces!

So it is now. Jesus with all His earthly and heavenly beauty is before us. The statue of His

Mother is near by. From faith we know that up in Heaven she is thinking of Him, following every incident of His tabernacle career. They are as united now as before. Jesus tells His Mother of His plans, of His difficulties, of His disappointments. Mary receives the messages of her children on earth and speaks to Jesus about us, asks Him to come to our relief, to convert the water of nature into the wine of grace, to forgive us penitent thieves, and to allow us to be her children.

Have we rightly understood our duties to our celestial Mother? It may be a sad revelation to us on the last day to find that we have spent our time on earth without a true devotion to Mary. The true devotion to Mary is the devotion of Jesus, a devotion that brings Our Lady into relation with every thought, word, and deed. It is a devotion that does all to please her, in imitation of her, through her, and by her.

"O Jesus, Son of Mary, teach us to love Thy Mother. So guide our thoughts that Mary may ever rule over them as their Queen; direct our words that they may appropriately salute her; govern our actions that she may have undisputed sway over them. In fine, let our hearts be possessed by its King, Thyself, and its Queen, Thy own Mother."

Very often souls complain of not being able to converse freely with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. They cannot, despite their best efforts, arrive at that stage where they feel at home with the Eucharistic Child. It is not always easy to determine the cause of this lack of home feeling, but is there not something wanting in our devotion to the Child's Mother? We fail, perhaps, to develop the atmosphere of the sanctuary on account of our coldness towards the tabernacle Queen. In that case, we have but ourselves to blame. Our religion is not the religion of Christ unless the Blessed Mother play a prominent part in it. Let us amend, then, our conduct towards her; let us love her more, honour her more, and we shall find that our visits to the tabernacle will be more tender, more affectionate, and more homelike.

POINT III. THE SLEEPING CHRIST

In our little dramatization of the Nazarean Home, we consider for the last scene, a picture representing the sleeping Christ. Tired out with work, exhausted from play, and having had something to eat, the Child Jesus is tucked away in bed by His Mother. Presently slumber stills His limbs, for nature easily obeys nature's Master. When the Child Christ went to bed to sleep, He slept. We can, in passing, learn a lesson from this; in our sleeplessness let us send our angel guardian with a message to the tabernacle, to beseech the Master to permit our body to still itself in sleep.

The sleeping Christ! How beautiful He must have looked as, flushed from the exertion of the day, He quietly reposed under His Mother's watchful gaze! What looks of love Our Lady must have directed towards her sleeping Beauty! She may have thought all the while that her tokens of affection went by unnoticed, but Christ, Whose Heart was ever awake, blessed her for every glance, and rewarded her for every fresh proof of love.

We may well consider the Child Christ as if asleep in the tabernacle. Since the time St. Joseph put Him to bed in His golden cot, He has never broken the stillness of the tabernacle chamber. To us has been allotted the charge of watching over the sleeping Child. We shall take care of Him; we shall watch over Him; and no intruder shall dare profane His sacred slumbers. Let us take up our stand beside the altar, fix our eyes upon the tabernacle, and pour out our heart to Him.

"O Master, my God and my All, I love Thee. Today, perhaps, when Thou camest out to see me at Communion, I did not speak plainly. I was confused. I was too absorbed in the externals. Now as I rest quietly before Thee, I protest my earnest desire to love Thee. I wish I could love Thee more than anyone else in the world. This is a secret, Jesus, between Thee and me."

But is He asleep? Does He not hear? No, Christ is not asleep. He smiles at our childish prattle. Gloriously risen from the dead, His Body is no more subject to the laws of sleep; so His resurrection is one long vigil, exempt from fatigue and replete with sweet consolation.

We may think we were unnoticed as we sped our thoughts to the tabernacle, but Christ saw all, heard all, and bade His angel take note to reward us on our entry into His Kingdom. When, therefore, we watched before Him, He loved us for our love, rewarded us for our thoughtfulness, and strengthened us for our work. Then, just as His awakening meant for Our Lady a joyous outpouring of affection, so also His direct physical contact with us in Holy Communion will bear the imprint of the love we showered upon Him when He was tucked away in His ciborium bed. The lesson of this scene is that to prepare ourselves for a worthy, fervent, useful Holy Communion, we must come to Christ in the tabernacle to make our preparation; we must let Him see by our attention that we value His Presence as our most precious treasure; that we appreciate the ocean of love in which He engulfs us; that we wish to leave nothing undone to greet Him with the greatest possible love on His arrival into our hearts.

Thus ends our little meditation entitled "The Child Christ." Strong faith, lively imagination, with plentiful applications of love—and the past reappears with unusually startling reality. Let us profit by the advantages of the tabernacle to make every mystery in the life of Our Master assume the character of actuality, and to have Christ in person teach us the great lessons of love He taught the humble inhabitants of Palestine nineteen hundred years ago.

CHAPTER IV

THE MASS

THE time comes for us to assist at Mass; that is, to witness an action that surpasses in wonder the creation of the world, that eclipses in marvel the prodigies of the Old Law. In other words, the Sacrifice of the Mass is the most important, the most thrilling, the most stupendous action that can take place in the whole universe. How can we so assist at it as to derive the greatest possible good for our souls? For present reflection, let us indelibly imprint two truths on our minds: The first, that the Mass is the identical reproduction of the drama of Calvary; and secondly, that the way for us to derive most benefit from it is to become true victims for Christ.

The Council of Trent declares that between this Sacrifice and the Sacrifice of Calvary, there is a difference only in the manner of offering. The victim is the same, the priest is the same, the act of sacrifice is the same, but the mode of offering is different. This difference is but accidental or non-essential, just like that between equal values in gold and silver coinage; the accidental monetary form differs but the substantial amount is the same. The altar and the Cross are the same sacrifice. The immolation of Calvary is associated with the blood-curdling blasphemies of the Jews, the horrid sound of crack-

ing bones, the gruesome sight of dripping blood, the shame and torture of Christ as He hung upon the infamous gibbet. This was the exterior appearance of Calvary; but what made that deicide pleasing in the sight of the Eternal Father was the interior act by which Christ freely and willingly accepted the death imposed upon Him by the Jews, and offered up His bleeding Body in redemption for the sins of the world. The free oblation of Christ accepted as ransom by God, effected the redemption.

Today on the altar the same essential act is reënacted. On the table of sacrifice Christ offers Himself principally for the sins of an ever-offending generation. His Blood is mystically separated from His Body; He is placed in a state, to all appearances, equivalent to death. In an ordinary individual, death always results when the body is drained of its blood. Now, upon the altar at Mass, the Body is at one side, the Blood at the other, and Christ, the same Personality of Calvary, with a Heart as overflowing with love now as then, freely and willingly offers Himself to His Father for the world. This act of oblation does not differ essentially from the offering made on Calvary. What matters it then if the exterior mode be changed? If blasphemy, dripping blood, excruciating pain, were the associates of the first offering, these, though important, were after all purely accidental. The world is redeemed today as it was in the year 33 by the act of oblation in which Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, spontaneously offered Himself as a Victim to His Eternal Father and begged that He be accepted on behalf of mankind.

What a wonderful truth this is: The Mass is the same as the Sacrifice of Calvary; in other words, whenever we go to Mass we are, in reality, going to Calvary. Had we been permitted to stand with Our Lady and St. John at the foot of the Cross and there to realize that we were witnessing an act which not only bespoke infinite love for us, but also offered to God infinite glory, infinite reparation, infinite thanksgiving, and omnipotent impetration, we should have considered ourselves the most favoured beings in the world. The knowledge gleaned from the spectacle before us would render the moments spent at the foot of the Cross the most precious of a lifetime—aye, they would be the envied opportunities of the world's lifetime. Yet this favour is ours each and every time we are present at the Sacrifice of the Mass. The love with which Christ offers Himself anew on the altar is just as supreme, just as perfect as it was on Calvary. God the Father receives identically the same glory, the same adoration, the same praise from the Immaculate Host of the Mass as He did nineteen hundred years ago from the Blood-Dripping Victim of Calvary. More satisfaction for sin is given to God at Mass than from the united worship of the whole celestial court and the entire earthly array. We do more genuine good towards canceling justice by assisting at one

Mass than if we had spent a lifetime in hard penance. And as for prayer, the value of the petition presented by Jesus Christ on the altar is simply omnipotent in its efficacy. Christ promised that anything asked in His Name would be granted. But how much greater efficacy must not that prayer have which is made over His dying Body at a time when God the Father is all intent on hearing and granting our petitions!

We ardently desire at times to work for the greater glory of God. We would swell the hymns of praise that arise from earth to Heaven. Let us understand that there is nothing in the whole world or in the broad expanse of Heaven as acceptable to God as one Mass. To begin a day, then, without the greatest of all prayers, is to rob God of an infinite amount of glory; it is to deprive ourselves of the satisfaction of giving to God that ineffable pleasure; it is to begin the day's battle without proper acknowledgment of God's infinite claims upon us. Nothing can compensate for that lost Mass. Pray as long as you like, make your day one long day of penance, and you are still far behind in the race with the truly Christian, appreciative soul who has understood the lesson of the Cross, and fervently assists at the morning's Sacrifice.

Oh, let us pray that these truths may sink deeply into our souls and that we may learn to appreciate more fully the value of the sublime Sacrifice of our altars. Let us learn to respect and reverence

this prodigy of love—the Son of God voluntarily submitting to the humiliation of undergoing a second death—before which the astonished angels veil their faces, bow down, and adore.

* * *

God grant that, being penetrated with His teaching, our attendance at Mass may be characterized by the most careful attention, the greatest reverence, and an ardent desire to profit by the incomparable riches of the Sacrifice. Given this doctrine, the one ambition of our life shall be to assist worthily at the oblation; the one fear—the dread of having to lose Mass. It takes little to lose a Mass, and yet it means the perpetration of a deed by which the Christian voluntarily renounces his priceless Christian heritage, and condemns his soul to begin the day as a pagan.

"O Mary, Mother of Jesus, teach us to understand the Mass. Show us what you saw on Calvary. Help us to realize that in the Mass Jesus renews the heroic offering He made on the bloodstained mountain of Jerusalem. Fill our hearts with a greater desire to profit by the Mass and with deeper gratitude to the Church for repeating daily this sublime sacrifice in order to save us. Mother of Christ, keep us from ever losing a Mass, and teach us to live day by day in the shadow of the mystic cross, so that one day, with the good thief, we may be with thee and Christ in Paradise."

Having once understood that the Mass is the

same sacrifice as that of Calvary, we seek the best way of assisting at it. For this purpose we review a few notions on Sacrifice. The fact of our creation imposes upon us certain obligations, fundamental duties towards Our Creator. Ever Our Sovereign Lord, Our Master, Our greatest Benefactor, He is at the same time the object of our affections and the source of every good we need for soul and body. These attributes of God imply the duties of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition on our part-duties not of one day, but of every day, and every moment of our lives. Now to acknowledge properly these claims, we have recourse to a particular visible sign, one capable of being given to God alone. Strictly speaking, the most perfect way of satisfying our duty, would be to offer human life in its destruction. Now God has forbidden this, with the consequence that we must look elsewhere for our victim. But victims, other than human, have long since irritated the Almighty; so what is left for us?

The answer to this is given by God. Centuries back in the days of the prophets, He announced that He would be Our Sacrifice; "Burnt offering and sin offering Thou didst not require; then said I, Behold I come." (Ps. xxxix. 7-8.)

At Mass Christ becomes Our Victim, Our Sacrifice, amply satisfying by His Infinite worship, our duties of adoration and thanksgiving. One tear of His, one drop of His Blood, would have been suffi-

cient to wash away the stains of a myriad of worlds. Yet at every Mass He drains into the Chalice every drop of His Sacred Blood, and willingly offers, sacrifices It for our souls. Herein lies the secret we have been seeking. To assist at Mass well, we must make the Mass our sacrifice as well as the Sacrifice of the Divine Victim; we must become with Christ, victim, that is, we must come to Mass prepared to offer, and actually to offer ourselves and all that we can call our own, to the service of the Almighty. By such an act we can testify to God that as He has given us all, we are ready to immolate all to His Honour and to satisfy our obligations to Him. God refuses human sacrifices and accepts the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son. But this does not relieve us of the obligation of signifying to God our personal willingness to do all we can to please Him; and as Mass-time is by far the best time to pray, it is at Mass, in union with the Divine Victim, that we should offer ourselves in Sacrifice to God, so that perfect union may exist between the Heart of Christ and ours.

If this point be well understood, the whole secret of sanctity is found. Sanctity does not consist so much in accomplishing striking exterior deeds for God, as in the interior perfecting of the will by which we become ready to do, and try to do, all we can to please God. And if we be willing to undergo any torment, submit to any sacrifice, rather than offend Him, this conduct throughout life will sure-

ly result in making us saints. At Mass our heart should be in perfect sympathy with the Heart of Our Saviour Victim. The same perfect note of sacrifice, of loyal immolation, should sound in our heart as it does in His, so that the Eternal Father may hear the same harmonious accord in both. We make use of the Mass to acquit ourselves adequately of our essential duties to God; but this does not exempt us from signifying in our small, finite way, and as best we can, that we are prepared to do our utmost to please God.

Let us form the resolution to be more generous, more earnest, more self-sacrificing in the service of God. Let us be so well disposed that we may be able to say from our hearts: "My God, I prefer to die a thousand times than ever offend Thee by mortal sin. O my Saviour, to prove to You my sincerity, I make this request of Thee; If Thou, through Thy knowledge of the future, knowest that I am about to fall into mortal sin today, then earnestly do I beseech Thee to let me die now rather than crucify Thee by such an act of treason!"

At the Offertory of the Mass, when the celebrant mixes water with wine, let us remember that that water represents our hearts, our bodies, all that we have, and that it signifies our willingness to be part of the immolation. It is our duty, then, as covictims with Christ, to enter into the symbolism intended by the Church and unite ourselves to that water that the priest holds aloft in the golden chalice.

Then, as the sacred rite of the Mass slowly approaches the awful moment of Consecration, let us endeavour to increase the perfection of our union with the Divine Victim, in order that at the mystic death of Christ at the Consecration, the Eternal Father may behold the pleasing sight of the Redeemer and His redeemed united in offering Him perfect adoration, infinite thanksgiving, adequate reparation, and most humble petition.

Oh, if we could say: "O my God, here I am, Thy little victim, Thy martyr of love. I love Thee with my whole heart, and am ready with Jesus to die to prove my love. Like Thy Son, I offer Thee my body and soul." And to Jesus: "O sweet Jesus, Thou didst die for love of me, let me die for love of Thee. Take my life at this instant if it be pleasing to Thee; and if Thou desire me to live, let my life be in conformity with Thy holy Will. Jesus, Divine Victim, my Victim, help me by the merits of Thy precious Blood to be a victim with Thee, so that together with Thee I may properly honour Thy Eternal Father."

From the Consecration onward, we must direct our attention to the spirit of the Canon of the Mass, striving to enter fully into the many beautiful sentiments expressed in these prayers—gems of Divine worship. Thus, after offering to God the gift of His own Divine Son, we plead to be made partakers of every grace; then we loose the saving flood of the Precious Blood upon the poor souls suffering in the dungeons of Purgatory to obtain their re-

lease; after which we breathe a prayer that we may be admitted to the company of the first martyr victims of Christ. We crystallize every aspiration of our whole being into that beautiful little prayer which immediately precedes the "Pater," and with the utmost fervour of body and soul, "by Christ" and "in Christ," we give all possible honour and glory to God.

The "Pater Noster" furnishes the most propitious of all moments for prayer. We cannot imagine a more favourable moment to approach Almighty God. Everything in Heaven and on earth has been adjusted to lead to the formation of the petition by us, and the hearing and granting of the same, by God. Jesus, the Divine, Unspotted Victim of Calvary, has just renewed the heroic offering of His life-blood for us. While He still lies pleading on the altar for us, we take advantage of His mediation. and join our prayers with His to salute our common Father in Heaven. The result is that the aroma of Christ's great sacrifice—that of His life—reconciles us to God, and disposes Him to receive favourably any demand. Let us say, then, with unbounded confidence: "Give us this day our daily bread"our particular need, which is sustenance for soul and body.

After the "Pater" we redouble our affection for the Immaculate Lamb. Looking fondly at Him, we prepare for Communion, praying for the welfare of the Church, begging God that we may never offend Him and, above all, laying great stress on the fact that "we wish never to be separated from Jesus in the Blessed Eucharist." Then with an ardent plea to the Divine Victim that our union with Him may not contribute to our destruction but to our greater good and our eternal happiness, we consummate our prayer by uniting ourselves to Jesus, the God Who died for us, Who is willing to die again if necessary, and Whose great desire is that we live with Him in Communion, and for Him.

This ends the Mass, the greatest act of worship of which the earth is capable. Let us understand it rightly and strive very earnestly to share in its fruits whenever possible. It will mean for us a life of great happiness, spent in a manner most pleasing to God—a life spent at the foot of the Cross where the graces of the Redemption will flow into our souls most abundantly, enabling us to serve God faithfully during our exile and meriting for us to ascend with Our Saviour, the Judge, on the last day into His Kingdom of eternal happiness.

CHAPTER V

HOLY COMMUNION

H OLY Communion is one of the most consoling benefits of our religion. At Communion, more than at any other time, experience of the personal, individual contact with the Sacred Heart of Jesus brings home to us that we poor, sinful mortals are loved in a passionate, whole-hearted way by the Saviour of Mankind. We know that in the Mass, Christ dies for all, still at Mass we cannot sufficiently conceive that of the great multitude of souls for whom He died, Christ knows us, loves us, individually, personally, as His friends. But in Communion, we have Him, the Source, the Author, the Incarnation of all good, entirely to ourselves, at our disposal, for our convenience. Nearer, closer, He cannot come. He is ours, all our own. Oh, what a privilege! What an opportunity! What a responsibility! It is this responsibility, this opportunity, this privilege, that we need to bring home to our thinking hearts when we begin to consider the "reality" of Holy Communion. These things well understood, lead to the making of fervent and profitable Communions. Let us beg the intercession of the gracious Queen of the Sanctuary, and humbly ask her to help us in our reflections on Holy Communion.

What a privilege! We are going to receive Holy Communion. Do we realize what this means? Let

us pause a moment and slowly, calmly examine this most amazing fact. We poor, sinful mortals are going to receive into our hearts Him Who is the Incarnation of Divinity, of Perfection, of Sanctity! We creatures, drawn from out an abyss of nothing, mere atoms in the great universe, dare to pretend that our microscopic hearts may serve as thrones for the Lord God Almighty! Surely our senses must be deceiving us, our reason must be playing us a trick! This can never be. God is too Majestic, too Holy, too Powerful to lower His Divine attributes to our weakness and our littleness. This privilege, if it were ever granted, might perchance be given the angels. They are pure spirits untainted by contamination with flesh or sin. They would be fitting, although infinitely unworthy tabernacles of the Lord God. Or, if men were to be admitted to this Divine Feast, perchance the Patriarchs, the grand characters of the Old Law, might be granted this great privilege.

It might have been so. In our minds it would seem more fitting; but the truth is, it is not so; and what God denied to angels and patriarchs, He, out of infinite condescension, has granted to us. We, and we alone, of all created beings, are privileged to enter into such close companionship with God, that He actually deigns to take up His abode in our hearts.

"O God of Infinite Majesty, if faith did not illumine our souls, our reason would never permit us

to admit of so stupendous a fact. I—I fed with the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ! I to serve as palace for the King of Kings! I to hold God a prisoner in my heart—God, my Friend, my Guest, my Servant—my Slave!" Go, search the wide universe for privileges, for favours, for gifts—none can equal this wondrous act of Jesus Christ. Truly, God surpassed all His precious proofs of love in the institution of His Masterpiece, the Blessed Eucharist.

O happy tongue so soon to serve as a temporary resting place for the Lord God Almighty! O privileged roof of my mouth so soon to shelter the King of Kings. O heart, make ready; the time is coming. No royal palace ever contained a more worthy guest. No sovereign will ever meet a greater dignitary than this. God be blessed and infinitely praised for all His wonderful mercies on our behalf!

"Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament pray for us, help us to realize something of our happiness in this wondrous privilege of Holy Communion. Angel Guardian, watching at the door of our hearts, join with us in offering a royal welcome to Jesus. Arrange our exterior, dispose our interior, that these will in no way cause disappointment or regret on the part of God that He has loved so much a frail human creature. All ye angels and saints of Heaven, lend us your aid. Our King is coming. He is already on His royal journey to our hearts.

Clothe us with your merits; lend us your dispositions, so that because of you, if not for us, Jesus will find some compensation for His Divine Act of folly in imprisoning Himself in our hearts."

"Jesus, I go ahead to greet you. Forgive me, Master, for daring to imagine such a privilege. I can hardly grasp the truth. Master, it cannot be! I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter my house; say but the word and my soul shall be healed."

Nothing stirs the sacred stillness save the preparations that announce the coming of the King of Kings. The Lord, Jesus Christ, God, Saviour, Judge, is coming to me! What a privilege!

What an opportunity! Now, if ever, is our opportunity; now we may gain favours, make requests. Now, above all, may we show our appreciation for all that Jesus has done for us. Let us contrast for a moment our opportunities with the opportunities of those who lived with Our Saviour.

How often, when our mind goes over the scenes of His life, when we think of Mary Magdalen and others, do we not feel a twinge of holy envy, and we say: "If only I had the chance they had, I also would have made open profession of love. I also would have been willing to show my desire to die for Christ. If I had been at His Feet, how I would have profited by that rare opportunity to obtain riches of heavenly value; to drink at the fount

of heavenly waters; to make a thousand demands upon the loving Heart of my Saviour!"

Christian, stop!!! You are talking nonsense. Do you not know Whom you are entertaining? Do you realize that your God is in your heart, at your disposal, ready to receive the proofs of your affection, listening to your every sigh, prepared to grant every reasonable request? Christian, you combine all the opportunities of the Apostles, of the friends of Jesus, even of Our Immaculate Queen herself. You in your humble person now enjoy their wonderful privileges. Make the best use of those precious moments after Communion. Come, the time is passing rapidly. Christ will soon, by reason of His Eucharistic humiliation, be forced to take His departure, so it is now or never that you must take advantage of your golden opportunity.

"My God is a guest in my heart! O Jesus, my God, I adore Thee. All the way from Heaven to me! O God, what condescension, what love! All for me! Master, I long to tell You of my love. Jesus, I wish to love You more than anybody else in the whole world. I should like to love Thee with the enlightened affection of the angels, with all the pure affection of Thy Blessed Mother, with all the ardour of the Apostles, with all the generosity of the martyrs, with all the whole-hearted love of the virgins. Master, I should like to love Thee in Communion with the combined love of Heaven and earth. If I have not this love, let me pretend that

I have it; for it is the most fitting welcome I can give Thee. Bear with my foolishness, Master; Thou dost more for me than I can ever begin to do for Thee. Master, to prove my love for Thee, I am ready with St. Peter to die for Thee-not presuming as he once did, on human strength, but rather as St. Paul, "doing all things in Thee Who strengtheneth me." Let me work to the limit of my strength for Thee. So long as there is a breath in my body, let it be employed to make Thee loved in the Blessed Sacrament. Let me delight in doing the common duties of everyday life, the little hidden things to please Thee—all in a happy exchange for that immense ocean of love with which Thou dost flood my soul. O Master, in this happy embrace of Communion, let me, with St. John, lean my head upon Thy Bosom. Our hearts are so close together. Let them never be separated, not by sin under any form, nor even by physical separation from Thee after Communion. Master, Thou didst love St. John. They called him the Beloved Disciple. Thou seemest to love me almost as much as St. John. At least, Master, You grant me the same favour. Look, I am as close to Thee as ever he was close to Thee. I not only live in Thee, but Thou livest in me. Master, let my love, like that of John, be pure, simple, confiding—a love that will make me an apostle of Thine own virtue, Charity. Let love glow through every one of my actions; let all my words and deeds breathe its sweet perfume.

"O Master, with St. Mary Magdalen, I repent of ever having offended Thee. Let me wash with my tears Thy head, so cruelly crowned with thorns. They crowned Thee to expiate my sins of pride. Thy heart is broken by my ingratitude. Master, I am sorry. I did not mean what I did. Forgive me Jesus; I am trying to make it up to Thee. Remember what You said of Mary, the sinner: 'Many sins are forgiven her because she hast loved much.' Master, do you forgive? Whisper the answer; nobody will hear.

"O Fount of all good, now I may beg for gifts, for favours. I have so long been praying. My soul resembles a worn-out vessel, broken with continual misusage, leaking in places, needing countless repairs. Master, take it, recase it; give it humility as a solid foundation; line it with faith; cover it all over with charity; make it bright with hope—supply all the virtues of which I stand so much in need, that my heart may be less unworthy to receive Thee!

"Now, Master, I have one particular, special request to make of Thee, as the result of this day's Communion. By all the love Thou hast for me, by all the merits of Thy dear Mother, relying on Thy infallible promise, I ask Thee, Jesus Christ, Who art now in my heart, please grant this special favour . . . still, Master, if the request be not according to Thy holy Will, I am resigned; Thy Will is my will; may It be done! But, still, Master,

I should like to have this favour granted." . . .

We must not be selfish with our Communion. In it we must remember parents, relatives, friends, and enemies, those over whom we exercise some charge, our particular duties, the needs of the Church, the needs of the parish. All these can be made the object of prayer in the precious moments that so quietly glide by, after Holy Communion. As a general practise, in each Communion let us for ourselves have a special virtue to acquire, a grace to be received, a favour to be granted; for others, also, we may have special petitions to make. We may offer our Communion, for example, for some soul in Purgatory; and if we have no particular one in mind, give it to the soul that is nearest Heaven, so that one more saint may sooner sing the praises of God, thanks to our Holy Communion.

Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for this unmerited favour of Holy Communion! Our best welcome is woefully poor. Only Mary can entertain Jesus as He deserves. "Mother, I renounce all my feeble efforts to pay fitting homage to thy Son. I am not equal to the task. Come, make up for my deficiencies. Adore Him, thank Him, love Him for me, beg Him not to be offended with me, and ask Him to come again. Mother, keep me near Him; help me to be the bosom friend of the King of Kings, the Lord, Jesus Christ.

What a responsibility! If ever lukewarmness

should overtake us, if by some sad misfortune indifference should begin to spoil our Communions, then let us rouse ourselves from this terrible state by casting a glance at the responsibility attached to our Communion. Not that this consideration should ever prevent us from receiving Our Lord, but simply because a little of the fear of God is necessary to us as the beginning of wisdom, and the basis of humility.

In the first place, may God preserve us from that spiritual sickness which consists in depreciating Communion; that tepidity which permits us for a mere nothing, a forged excuse, to remain at home and thus refuse Our Lord admission to our heart. Such conduct certainly indicates lack of appreciation of the love, the riches, the benefits stored up in the Sacred Heart. Is it nothing to think more of our sleep, our paltry convenience in staying at home, than of Jesus Christ Himself and His wish to come into our souls? Remember that every Communion has been purchased by the Precious Blood of Christ. Christ waits to come to us. We say we do not care to receive Communion today; it is not worth the while. Perhaps there will be no punishment in store for this omission, but, perhaps again, some damned soul, a hundred years from now, looking back over a wasted life, will be able to trace the beginning of her fall from grace to the morning when, for a mere nothing, she gave up her Communion. Let us not forget this-Jesus Christ instituted the Eucharist to come daily into our hearts and He is God and God is not to be mocked.

If there be danger that indifference and lukewarmness may creep into our heart, it is well to reflect that in the Old Law the profane hands that touched but the Ark of God so irritated the Almighty that He hurled the owners to death. The worshippers in the Old Law were reminded; "Cursed is the man who does the work of the Lord negligently." What shall happen to us in the New Dispensation if we dare to take advantage of the humiliated state of Our Saviour, and begin to treat Him coldly, indifferently, and even refuse Him ordinary attention? Such conditions are the accompaniment of ill-prepared Communions and too brief thanksgivings. If we had to receive Communion from the top of a Mount Sinai, which all the while flashed thunder and lightning, then indeed we would realize that God in the Eucharist ought to be honoured as God.

Sometimes to the best of souls it happens that distraction, inattention, preoccupation, cause apathetic Communions, and chill the fervour of reception and thanksgiving. A little reflection on the fact that the God we so shamefully treat is to be also Our Judge on the last day, when He can punish us for deliberate irreverence, and even condemn us to the abyss of torture for sacrilegious Communions, will be sufficient to draw us out of our lethargy; and where love would fail, fear may gradually in-

duce us faithfully to prepare, fervently to receive, and diligently to make use of our Holy Communion. Yet we should strive that love should be our strongest motive.

"My God, it is out of love that I intend to receive Thee, out of love to entertain Thee. Yet, if love be wanting, do not, I pray Thee, condemn me, but take me to Thy heart as a poor, erring child, and gently heal my wayward soul. O, Jesus, teach me to receive Thee and out of love to look forward to this Banquet of God; to direct all my life to the happy trysting place at Thy altar, where Thou givest me the greatest proof of Thy personal love, and where I have the greatest consolation of entering into close union with Thee. Grant that my journey through life may be marked by the milestones of happy, fervent Communions, leading me day by day over the narrow path that enters into the Kingdom of Heaven, where I shall have the happiness of beholding unveiled, and for all eternity, Jesus of the Blessed Sacrament."

CHAPTER VI

OUR MEALS

I T MAY seem paradoxical, but experience teaches us that one of the best times to make fervent acts of love to Jesus Eucharistic, is during our meals. There is an analogy between the food of our bodies and the food of our souls; and we may take advantage of our repasts to make a never-ending series of reflections on the boundless love of our hidden God.

THE MEAL BELL

The bell sounds the summons: the meal is ready. Consciously or unconsciously, we usually respond with greater alacrity to this signal than to others. The true lover of Jesus can sanctify this imperative need by making of his repast one long banquet of love; so that if nature hastens him to the table, grace will not be absent on the way. The eagerness with which we are only too ready to give food to our body is a sad contrast to the tepidity, the coldness of our preparations for the morning's Communion. Why is it that such apathy characterizes our spiritual needs? No comparison can be made between the value of Communion and the food of the body. Yet, in spite of our knowledge of this fact, we constantly permit ourselves to make listless, indifferent Communions, when the mere sight of an attractive menu rouses an immediate desire

for food. The comparison shames us. Let us see what is the matter with our spiritual appetite. Let us generously promise that we shall force ourselves to acquire a love, an interest, a strong desire for Holy Communion, so that after a time we may be able to say truthfully; "My soul was more eager today for Communion than my body was for food," or; "My God is witness that, proportionately speaking, my soul was better prepared for Communion than my body for its meals." Until this day comes, we still have a long time to pass in the novitiate of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

THE GRACE BEFORE MEALS

We reach the table and invoke a blessing upon ourselves and our food. Did we ask God this morning to bless our preparation for Holy Communion? A little humility in our preparation for Holy Communion would have done us no harm. If we had been a little more delicate and thoughtful, we should have invited Our Lady to prepare the ciborium of our souls for the worthy reception of her Divine Son. But no! We wanted to do the whole thing ourselves, and the result was that the unpleasant odour of vanity and pride almost suffocated the Infant Jesus as He came into our heart. We should resolve to make a confession of our unworthiness and thus prepare ourselves fittingly for Holy Communion. For this purpose we shall begin to say the grace of Communion and solicit more carefully the coöperation of her who made the best of all Communions.

A GLANCE AT THE MENU

In the gifts which we are about to receive through the bounty of God, we can see the wonderful care Jesus takes of our welfare. The marvellous variety of food, the kinds of fruit, cereal, vegetables, and flesh, simply amaze us, if we stop awhile to consider. Every kind of taste has been stored up by Him in food—all to tempt man to eat, in order that by eating he may prolong his life and have a longer time to know, love, and serve God.

"O Jesus," we can exclaim, "how good You have been as Author and Inventor of all these things! Why didst Thou make so many varieties of fruit, so many kinds of vegetables, if not to lead us to discover, to recognize Your infinite love and tender consideration for us? Master, Thou art worthy of ten thousand times more gratitude than I can ever give Thee, but what I have I gladly bestow. Jesus, silent Dweller of our tabernacles, I thank Thee for providing so abundantly for the interests of my body. From henceforth every drop of liquid and every morsel of food will become for me an act of love, in grateful acknowledgment of the affection that inspired the creation of Thy gifts."

There is an infinite wisdom displayed in the creation of food and drink. No mind but that of a God could conceive and realize such wonders.

Water is the simplest, the most common gift of nature. We have long grown used to its presence, and so do not wonder at its nature; but in its very simplicity the wisdom of the Son of God is manifested in a marvellous way. The union of two gases, hydrogen and oxygen, forms that liquid known as water. Two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen unite to liquify into a substance indispensable for the preparation and assimilation of solid foods. Water quenches thirst and purifies flesh, wood, and mineral. Water is the natural atmosphere of fishes, it provides a highway from continent to continent. Without this beneficent gift of God, the vegetable kingdom would wither away and men and animals would die. All these reflections can pass swiftly through our minds as we glance at tumblers of water. Onlookers may notice a little preoccupation in our manner, but that the simple sight of a glass of water should be creating a whole series of loving thoughts to Jesus Eucharistic, will never enter anyone's mind.

We took water only as a random illustration. Similar reflections could be made about any other foodstuff or liquid. Apart from the peculiar taste in each food, its general composition can be considered. We may ponder on the life of the plant, from seed to blossom, from blossom to fruit; through such manifold operations it reached its final perfection, and in its finished form it lies before us. Jesus is Himself the Infinite Wisdom that

conceived the plant, the texture of the leaves, the quality of the blossoms, the peculiarity of taste, the shade of colour—everything, in fact, that makes up the perfection of the fruit or vegetable now offered to us. To Jesus, then, as the Author of food, be our everlasting gratitude, our complete love, our unremitting service. The transition from the earthly table to the heavenly one thus becomes easy and natural, and perfectly in harmony with the designs of Our Hidden Creator, Who meant to elevate the minds of men to Him by means of the things which He had made.

CHRISTIAN DISPOSITIONS

With these thoughts in mind, let us prepare to take our food. We say "prepare" because as Christians we must allow Christian dispositions to regulate our commonest actions. St. Paul said: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. x. 31.) Let us unite ourselves with Our Saviour and His Blessed Mother as they took their meals when they were on earth. The Christ Whom we received only this morning was like ourselves, human, and like ourselves. He also was obliged to eat. As He did all things well, we have but to imitate Him in this lowly act. We have but to unite ourselves to His way of preparing for eating and drinking; and to try to imagine ourselves eating and drinking as He would do were He in our place. The result will be

purity of intention, the sanctification of every drop and morsel, the supernaturalization of our whole refection and a more perfect use of the time we would have wasted, ordinarily speaking, at table. Henceforth we shall find more ways of increasing in merit, and of drawing closer to our ideal of perpetual union with Him by Whom all things were made.

We shall go to the table in the name of the Lord Jesus. He made us human, designed food to supply the wants of the body; so it is most evidently His holy Will that we do eat. But, this action can be performed in a most animal way. Alas! too many resemble herein the beast of the field. But this very necessity can be transferred by the Christian into an act of conformity to God's Will and worship of His wisdom. It is sufficient in order to merit by it, to acknowledge the Will of God in its performance. Some souls, misguided by false notions, would perhaps say that out of a spirit of mortification they would rather not eat. This mode of thinking is erroneous; it would pretend to make us what we are not. Christ attached pleasure to food in order that we might perform easily a duty we should otherwise shirk; so let us go to our repast with hearts filled with loving obedience to the Will of God.

"It is Your Will, O Jesus, that I begin to eat. This action is pleasant—I do not deny it. Grant me, O Divine Master, as much alacrity in acquitting myself of other actions, at times, to me disagreeable.

They, too, can be made pleasant, because they are like this-Your Will. For Thee, O Sacred Heart of Jesus, I begin to eat; just as for Thee, I begin to pray. What is life, dear Master, but one succession of actions done out of love for Thee? Some are seasoned with pleasure; others made bitter by repugnance. Some invite me by the joy they impart; others repel by the sacrifice they impose. Is it not true, Master, that the worthy Christian should follow You whether You offer him the consolations of Thabor or the chalice of Gethsemane? So, dear Lord, it is my true pleasure to eat out of love, and thus enjoy doubly these gifts of Your loving Heart. May every bite I eat, and every drop I drink, represent as many Spiritual Communions. O Master, if it were possible, I should like to receive You as many times into my heart as there are drops and morsels in this my meal. May every drop represent an act of love, and every morsel of food an uplifting of my heart to Thee, dear Maker of the universe.

"O Jesus, if I eat reasonably, I shall probably live longer. The longer I live, the more Communions I shall receive; and since each Communion is a pledge of future glory, an extra claim to eternal happiness, my eating will be of untold advantage to me. Master, be Thou forever praised for having concealed so secretly and so graciously Thy Sacred Self behind the duty of my daily food. I shall eat then, Master, to live; I shall live in order to love

Thee, to make Thee known and loved. I shall live in order to receive more Communions, to make more visits, to assist at more Masses. Protect me, O my Saviour, from ever losing sight of these Christian dispositions.

"O Master, I fear this meal. How many have come to their doom from the pleasure of the table! How many, like those of whom Thy Apostle Paul warns us, made gods of their stomachs! In the beginning they sanctified their meals, but nature gradually gained dominion over them. Gourmands, they exist for the pleasures of the table; epicures, their life centres around the tongue. Master, this tongue that is to taste these foods is the same that serves as Thy throne when You so lovingly condescend to rest upon it on Your journey to my heart. Grant, O Divine King, that this tongue may not by this meal cause its owner to lose one iota of love for Thy Eucharistic Bread."

ACTUAL EATING

As yet we have not tasted anything; let us begin to eat. We lift our knife and our fork to make the first division of our food; and as these instruments do their work, we might fancy our food divided into millions of morsels, representing each in its turn one of the Hosts received that morning by millions of hearts. Would that every one of those million tiny morsels, divided by our whimsical fancy, might be a voice of love crying out to God how much we

love Him, how much we thank Him, how much we want Him to be known, loved, and praised! Would that those million atoms might be a million hearts, filled to the full with love of Thee, O Sacred Host. "O Master," we say, as we bend forward cutting our meat or buttering our bread, "Master, when shalt Thou begin to be served as Thou dost deserve?"

Then there is the flavour of food. Let us thank Jesus for that. He it is Who designed that special degree of attractive taste. "Thank You, O Divine Creator, for all Thy love in this food. Thou art good to do so much for love of me; but Master, Thy goodness appears to better advantage in the food of my soul. That food is the Manna from Heaven, containing in itself all sweetness, whose taste lasts forever if we only receive it properly. O Jesus, why is it that men do not perceive the sweetness of the angelic food? Surely You do not refuse to give to others what You give to me! O Master, their senses are closed against Thee; they live in the world of sense, and seek so eagerly after the things of time that they give no thought to those of eternity. Divine Saviour, permit me to sacrifice a little of this food today, so that to some poor hungry soul may be given divine consolation in Holy Communion."

Saying this, we take less sugar in our tea, consent not to ask for some sweet bread, or do without some condiment; or again, unnoticed by others, slip a morsel of bread unbuttered into our mouths. All those acts are small, almost too trivial to bear recording; but under the fire of love they glow with the light and heat of supernatural merit.

"O Saviour," we say again, "how is it that men will keep away from Thy Divine Banquet? Perhaps it is myself who am to blame. If only I had mortified myself more, sanctified myself more, had done without this luxury, or denied myself that pleasure, perhaps more graces would have flowed into my neighbours' hearts, and they would now be as eager for the Bread of Heaven as they are for that of earth. O Master, give me strength to do Thy Will in all its manifestations, to shoulder my cross and to follow You on the road to Calvary, knowing that if only I am brave, I myself shall enjoy the happiness of Heaven and obtain the same favour for many others."

THE FOOD WITHIN US

Nature accomplishes its tasks very easily. That food taken into the body is digested, and, after various processes, becomes assimilated, so that it enters into our flesh and bone, becomes a part of ourselves, so that what was once meat and bread is now flesh and bone and muscle.

The supernatural order is built on the natural. God has ordained that the food of our souls should pass through a similar process. In some respects Holy Communion cannot do what corporal food

does—that is, Christ, is not cut, divided, masticated, digested; but Christ does become united to us. We become so closely identified with Him that we live His life; and in the end, by faithful correspondence to the grace of our Communion, we, so to speak, no longer live of ourselves, but it is Christ Who lives in us.

Are we truly united to Jesus after Holy Communion? How many times do not those precious Hosts become prisoners in our hearts to be treated with indifference, apathy, and neglect? What! we are richer than the richest of men with the King of Kings as our guest, and yet soon after Communion we fear not to cast our treasures to the winds, to plunge ourselves into the dust of the world! Strange, passing strange, but oh, how bitterly true! "Pardon me, O Saviour! Chastise me until I learn to treat Thee as Thou dost merit."

Our resolution should be for perfect union with Our Divine Guest all the while He stays in the throne room of our hearts. Our time must be entirely at His disposal; our thoughts must centre on Him, revolve around Him. To neglect Him for others would be gross discourtesy, unless He should so ordain it; and then we should be acting only out of a desire to please Him. Our King is in intimate converse with us. The precious moments are passing; let the world wait. The whole day can be used to speak to the world, but God is thus intimately at our disposal only for a few minutes, and

Heaven and earth beseech us to make the best use of our privilege.

Apart from the physical union consequent upon the reception of Holy Communion, there should also begin a mystic union with Christ, to be continued throughout the day. If we keep ourselves recollected, united with God, the taste, the consolation, the grace of that morning's angelic food will remain with us during the various hours of our day, perfuming the dry moments, sweetening the bitter tasks, and filling disagreeable duties with the music of God's pleasure. Let us strive, then, to retain alive within us the grace of that morning converse with Jesus, by means of frequent aspirations to the Guest of our souls. "Praised be the most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament." "Master, Thou camest today to remain with me. Art Thou still in my heart? Help me now to do this task, to overcome this temptation, to perform this act of virtue." "Jesus, Thou wert good to come to me today. Master, would it not be nice to be always receiving Communion? But then we could not work nor perform our mission in this world; so, Master, sweeten my life by Thy grace; help me to prepare to receive Thee worthily tomorrow. Jesus art Thou still there? All for Thee, Sacred Heart of Tesus!"

In speaking of the Divine union contracted between our souls and Christ, we must not forget that one of the purposes of this union is to transform

us gradually into living images of Christ. Just as natural food loses its identity to become the substance of its assimilator, so also we, after Communion, should lose ourselves in Christ, so that His image may be seen in our every thought, word, deed, and action. If our Communions do not help us to acquire this resemblance to Our Divine Master, then something is at fault, either in the preparation, or in the reception of Communion, or in our thanksgiving. Generally all three are responsible for our lack of progress after so many Divine banquetings. Let us resolve to allow our Communions to effect more in us; let us devote greater attention to those precious, precious moments after Communion, when the Author, the Perfector of all virtue, is within our hearts, ready with the boundless treasures of His grace to help us mould ourselves into living copies of Jesus. Let us borrow humility, love, patience, and the other virtues in turn from their inexhaustible Source. "O Divine Master, I feel I am wanting in union with Thee. Lend me a little of Thy Divine spirit of recollection today. Hold me close to Thy Heart so that all day my thoughts may be constantly in Thy presence."

At the beginning of the day we may foresee that of ourselves our day will be only an empty record of selfish actions. Let us then plead with the Divine Visitor to give us the grace to do all out of love for Him, in order that all our actions may ascend to God with the aroma of Divine Charity.

These, then, are the reflections that run through our mind as we are engaged in our repast. As food is assimilated to our flesh, so also, and in a more perfect manner, should Christ become one with us and we with Him.

THE THANKSGIVING

We began our meal out of love of God. We invoked His blessing upon it. Let us not forget to return Him proper thanks at the end. "O Jesus, a thousand thanks for all Thy goodness! How carefully Thou dost provide for all my wants. How bountifully Thou didst supply the table of nature, so that in feeding my body, Thou couldst teach me to feed my soul. Thanks, then, a thousand thanks! Teach me to love Thee, O Sacred Host, the Author of all my food! Permit me to become one with Thee as this food becomes one with my flesh. Permit me to serve Thee until death, faithfully, generously, completely. Jesus, I give myself to Thee. Do with me as Thou wilt! Amen."

CHAPTER VII

OUR WORK

To LIVE always in the actual presence of the tabernacle would be heavenly, but it would not be human. God did not intend men to spend their time exclusively around the altar, otherwise He would not have given them a body subject to fatigue, sensitive to the atmosphere, and in need of nourishment. We have a body to be clothed, fed, and rested. To secure garments, food, and shelter requires money, and, as money does not descend from the clouds, men must in one way or other work to obtain it.

Moreover, as members of the great human society, certain duties devolve upon us which necessarily take us away from our prie-dieu. To some it is the care of the household, the preparation of food, the maintenance of clean living and all the various duties that find their centre in the household. For others, it is the task of imparting knowledge to young minds, eager to imbibe the lessons of truth but as yet unable to do so by themselves. Duties as members of society? Why, their number is legion. The father, the mother, the priest, the religious, the teacher, the mayor, the policeman—where shall we end? All, in one way or another, have certain duties to perform which necessitate a

certain amount of work. Now these duties are as important in their own sphere as the hour of prayer before the altar. Our one duty as creatures is to do God's Will. If then, God places us in such and such a place in this world, it becomes clearly God's holy Will that we must acquit ourselves of the obligations incumbent upon that state. True, it may seem sweeter, more meritorious, to be kneeling before the altar, but if our duty at that moment be at the desk, or at the store, or out on the farm, then adoration before the altar becomes an act displeasing to God.

What, then, shall we do? We would fain stay always with Our Lord, but His Will bids us go elsewhere. Yet we feel, in spite of this consciousness of the necessity of work, that while God remains so near to us in the Eucharist, we must honour Him. Is there anything incompatible in these two duties? Not at all! The solution is quite simple. We may be required to leave the physical presence of Jesus Christ, but, this does not for a moment deprive us of the privilege of uniting ourselves spiritually to our tabernacle God. In other words, we may absent ourselves in body but not in spirit; that is, as true adorers of the Eucharist, we shall strive to think of Our Prisoner, God, all during our work. Come, let us be off! The call to our task is imperious; it will not brook delay. But wait! This action, this work must be done in a Christian manner, in a Eucharistic manner. Let us, then, prearrange the

task. It will consist in the preparation, the actual work, and the retrospect.

THE PREPARATION FOR WORK

As we kneel before the altar in the early morning, we spare a moment from the sweetness of prayer to look ahead and foresee the duties that God expects us to perform during the day. They loom up before us in all their seriousness and responsibility. So much depends upon their being well done. Health, happiness, success in life, even the salvation of our own and other souls may depend on the manner in which we shall work today. Even if no such great consequences are attached to our tasks, we still shall have to answer to God for them on the Day of Judgment. Can we expect to work in a way pleasing to God unless we obtain the help of God?

No! Christ said, "Without Me you can do nothing"; so let us ask Our Saviour's help.

"Master, Patron of labourers, Son of a carpenter, I am about to begin my day's work, and I come to Thee to ask Thy blessing. I know that by myself I am incapable of doing this action well. Thou art the Master-Workman. All knowledge, Divine as well as human, is possessed by Thee. Bless my efforts; guide my thoughts; direct my hands; so that the approbation of Heaven will descend upon my labour at the fall of day, and I may enter into rest even as Thou, God, didst rest from Thy labours

during the days of Creation, and didst see that the work of Thy Hands was good. Jesus in the tabernacle, I am going to work today to please Thee. What other motive could I have as a Christian, Thy follower? Thou didst do all out of a desire to please me, Thy unworthy disciple. At least I can reciprocate, since Thou art God, and it is my bounded duty to work out of love for Thee. My motto then, Master, will be 'All for Thee, Sacred Heart of Jesus!' As yet I know not what the day will bring forth, work with pleasure, or work with sorrow; but what does it matter? It will be all for Thee in the tabernacle. By this intention Thou wilt see that I work for Thy glory, and is not that all Thou canst ask of me? Every effort, every struggle, every movement of mine during my work will be a note in the glorious hymn of love, from the heart of a creature to the Heart of its Captive God.

"Before I begin work, O my Saviour, I accept success or failure; Thy Will be my will. Crown me with triumph, or let me be disgraced with failure—what matter? Thou didst please Thy Father on the darkened summit of Calvary even as Thou didst win His approbation amid the glories of Thabor. It will be hard perhaps to fail; but then, O Lord, this little drop of bitterness in the chalice will make me look forward all the more to the land of eternal sunshine, where disappointment is unknown. "Master, help me to do this work so that it will

not cause me to lose sight of Thee. How many have departed from God owing to the manifold occupations of a busy life! Their intentions were good, but alas! they permitted the exterior world to enter into their hearts and take complete possession. Dear Saviour, I fear this day lest my work will be detrimental to the interests of my soul. Stay with me; follow me from Thy tabernacle; bestow blessings and graces; lead angels to comfort me in my little garden of Gethsemane; help me to drink my chalice until the time comes when nothing shall ever separate me from Thee.

"O Master-Labourer, dost Thou remember the tasks done by Thyself in Nazareth? It would be superfluous to speak of their perfection. All I want to do is to unite my intentions and dispositions to Thine. Master-Carpenter, lend me Thy disposition, for I would work as Thou didst work."

Thus fortified, we turn away from the tabernacle and the altar. One last look and out we plunge into the world to do the Will of God. "Remember, O Christ, all for Thee. Bless me once more."

ACTUAL WORK

We are at work. Our brain, our senses, all unite in the task slowly evolving itself by our means. To please God we throw ourselves into it just as merrily as we would into a favourite game. What better proof of love is to be found than that love should show itself in deeds? Words are easily forged;

they come quickly and quickly depart; deeds, however, demand exertion, mortification of pleasure, application of brain and muscle. Working, then, out of love for God, and working as well as we can, we prove the loyalty, the integrity of our love. The harder, then, we work, the more shall we show our love, the more shall we prove the depths of our affection; and, as the hours go by and our fatigue increases, so will the mercury rise higher and higher in our thermometers of love, as it will mean more to work with cheerfulness than when our task was begun.

We take so much for granted; we accept the Eucharist with all Its priceless treasures of Mass, Communion, and visits, as a matter of course—as if we were entitled to It—when all the while the angels, far higher and nobler than we, are deprived of It. No, let us work to deserve in some small measure this great treasure. Let us at least prove ourselves less unworthy to assist at Mass or to receive Holy Communion. In other words, let us make use of our work as the price of our admission to the favours of the altar, so that when the angel of the sanctuary stops us at the threshold we can say, "Angel, I worked for this favour, I felt unworthy before, but now I have something to show my God; I proved my affection by deeds. Here are golden hours of work, brilliant with gems of affection, reposing in a casket of good intentions.

"Master! this work is hard; it humiliates me; it

causes suffering; but Master! Thy Eucharist was the price of pain, of torture. Can I not imitate Thee in some faint, far-off way? Thou didst come to us over the thorny path that led to Calvary. Can I not at least bear some slight cross to prepare for Thee, Crucified One, Who comest into my heart in tomorrow's Communion? Would it not be shameful for me, Thy so-called disciple, to desert Thee at the first sign of the Cross?"

No! let us with St. Mary Magdalen stand at the foot of the blood-stained tree and bear bravely all hardship, in order to resemble more closely the God Who hangs thereon. During our work let us employ the services of our celestial page, our Guardian Angel. Angels are messengers from God to man; let us use them to convey messages from man to God. "Angel, my Guardian dear, do me a favour. I am here, away from Jesus. He is in the tabernacle. Will you take a message for me? Tell Him that I still love Him. Tell Him that I work to please Him. Angel, here, take a present; wait until I have repeated some aspirations of love; carry them off to our common Master; lay them at His feet; tell Him that they come from me; await His pleasure and return with His blessing."

At still another time, we can send off a wireless telephone message to the throne room. "Central, give me the tabernacle; I want to speak to my Saviour." Then when connections have been made and we feel that God is listening, let us tell Him of

our love, of our desire to work for His glory, of our need for His assistance. These are all little ruses by which we seem to be making fools of ourselves, but did not St. Paul say that the Cross itself was foolishness to the unbelievers? The sophisticated ones may smile, they may despise our infantile manners, but if such deeds serve to have us come before the altar at the next visit with renewed love, are they not worth while?

The principle behind the foregoing is that we must, while at work, make frequent use of ejaculatory prayer. Such prayers consist of short aspirations, brief acts of love, best found in the forms which the Church has enriched with indulgences. These short prayers are invaluable to the good Christian. Our lips become tired at times in elaborating long, set forms of prayer; but given an ejaculation, one that does not disengage our attention from exterior work, in the twinkling of an eve we may offer a genuine prayer. Let us, then, form this precious habit of repeating again and again. while at work, some prayer in honour of the Blessed Sacrament. The one very suitable for this purpose is one that has the honour of being the third last prayer* that the Pontiff of the Eucharist indulgenced before his death, namely; "Praised be the

^{*}While in Rome in 1914, during the course of a private audience, the author personally asked Pope Pius X to grant indulgence to the prayer, "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament." His Holiness graciously consented. The indulgence of 100 days "Toties Quoties" was formally announced by the Sacred Congregation of the Holy Office on July 11 of the same year.

most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament." This prayer has the benefit of combining a perfect act of love, consisting in the wish to praise Our Lord, with devotion to the Sacred Heart, and the dearest expression of the Heart of Christ, namely, the Blessed Sacrament. Each time we repeat this prayer we make a fervent act of love and we please Our Lord by honouring His sublimest gift.

We have often, as Christians, shuddered at the way impious men profane the Sacred Name of God. Men at their work, without any apparent reason, at the slightest pretext, use their lips to revile that Name before which the whole heavenly court bends in profound adoration. If the impious, the wreckers of the vineyard of the Master, so find time to effect the purposes of satan, why should not we, avowed followers of Christ, have frequently on our lips that Sacred Name in prayer? These aspirations will be little acts of love, unknown, unheard by the busy multitude, but they will give an atmosphere of holiness to our work and make our whole day—our whole lives—beautiful and more meritorious in the sight of God. If we wish to pass our time Eucharistically, let us take the resolution to intermingle plentifully those acts of love all through our daily tasks, so that if we do nothing else but say those few aspirations to Our God, our day will not be ill-spent; something at least there will be for presentation to the Lord at the day's close.

THE RETROSPECT

There comes a time when the signal to stop work is given. Consummatum est. "It is finished." Oh, that we could all be able to say this as Our Tabernacle God said it when the great work of the Redemption was at an end! At any rate our task is over and we return after the harvest to present our sheaves to the Master of the field. Our preliminary act, while kneeling, should be to offer all the deeds of the day to the Eternal Father, through the Sacred Heart of Jesus. "O Eternal Father I offer Thee the Heart of Jesus in the tabernacle to repair my sins committed during this work, to supply for all my deficiencies, to purify whatever good that has been done. O Saviour, the work is finished. It could have been done better; other minds, other hands might have laboured to greater perfection, would have produced more satisfactory results; but, at least, Master, my task was done out of a desire to please Thee, and is not this all in all?

"Master, I come now to Thy throne, to obtain an immediate reward for the day's deeds, and this reward, O Prisoner God, is none other than Thyself. I know already that You will not refuse me, so I can make my request with confidence. Yes, Saviour, Thyself is all I ask—Thyself in Mass as my Victim to acquit my obligations to the Almighty; Thyself in Communion as my Food, giving me substance for the day's labour; Thyself in the altar

cell as my best and truest Friend, ever delighted to see me."

Now we can enjoy our visit with a free conscience, happy in the thought of having done our duty. Hours of labour become light and sweet in the prospect of seeing Jesus at their termination. Worn out with exertion, we rest quietly in the silent Church; we thank God for having allowed us to sanctify ourselves by work, for having given us this opportunity to lessen our shame ere we presented ourselves before the altar-throne.

"Master, one last prayer of a labourer; my work is done. Would that Thou mightest be satisfied with it! And if, Master, I have pleased Thee, my wish is that my whole life's work may find equal favour in Thy sight; so that one day, when I come before Thee for judgment, Thou mayest say; 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of the Lord.' Amen."

CHAPTER VIII

VISITS

ET US go and call on Our Lord! We have worked for Him; we have played; so a considerable time has elapsed since we last met. Our Lord must be wondering what has become of us; so off we go to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

The practise of making visits to Our Captive King is one of the most touching of our faith; for it reveals a realization, an affection, a practical demonstration of belief, that makes the non-Catholic envy its possessor. Visits to the tabernacle naturally follow a strong faith in the Real Presence. If Christ be with us, He is entitled to our worship. This worship takes the form of visits which are always a sign of lively faith, and mark the distinction between the languid and the fervent Catholic. Devout worshippers of Our Lord are ever ready by generous acts to attest their belief in His Divine Presence. That Presence calls for public recognition; the Hidden Christ demands from believers a manifestation of faith.

The sublime beauty of Mass cannot be with us all through the day. It comes with the freshness of dawn in the early morning, and ere we become aware, it is over until tomorrow. The sweetness of our Communion is also the happiness of a few short moments. St. John did not lean indefinitely

on Our Saviour's bosom, nor did Mary Magdalen continuously lave the Sacred Feet. These were rare privileges granted for a few fleeting moments, but once past, gone forever. So our joyful Communions come and go, leaving us apparently lost in the desert of life, awaiting the oasis of the morrow. Lost? Not at all. The love of Our Lord was greater than our poor human minds could fathom; so it devised for us a new source of refreshment, an oasis which we may always find, even in the greatest desert of days. It is the practise of making visits to the tabernacle. After Mass and Communion, Jesus does not go away; He still remains to cheer us in our land of exile, to comfort us in our wanderings over the sands of time, and to gladden and strengthen us by frequent intercourse. He remains upon the altar to be Our Friend, and expects to be treated as such. We cannot hope to become intimate with Him if we create a chasm of separation between us and the altar; for since He cannot come to visit us, we must go to visit Him.

The number of visits will depend greatly upon our time and circumstances. God does not want us to be irrational in our service to Him. We have imperative duties to perform, which necessarily prevent us from being at the altar; but in every well-arranged Christian life, there should be set apart a time sacred to a fairly long daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament. This visit is, indeed, just as sacred and important in its own way as

Mass and Holy Communion. Indeed, such visits mark the thoroughness of our Eucharistic training. They are the delicate attentions that bring out all that was solid and good in our Communion, and they prove the sincerity of the gratitude we loudly protested at the time of Mass. Apart from the main morning visit, which is, one may say, necessary and indispensable, if we can, during the day, spare time for occasional other visits, then by all means, in the name of God, let us not fail to make them, no matter how short. In fact, it would be most salutary, if we could arrange to see Our Lord, on one pretext or other, every hour and a half. This applies, however, only to those who live in a house where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. For others who have to come out of their houses to see Our Lord, one visit a day, or where convenient, two, would be all that Our Lord would ask. To allow too long a time to intervene between visits, for those who live with Our Lord, would savour of indifference and disbelief in that tremendous truth that the Son of God is dwelling under the same roof as themselves. Again, the fervour of prayer felt at Communion, is rapidly chilled by intercourse with the world. A short visit, at the expiration of an hour and a half, will fan into flame the smouldering embers, refresh us with the sweetness of Eucharistic grace, and start us off on our work with hearts full of love for the Dweller in the tabernacle. Visits like these are similar to plunges into the ocean of love; they bring to life tired members, purify us from the dross of the world, freshen our minds, and in general act as a stimulus, imparting renewed vigour to our whole spiritual being.

How to employ our moments before the tabernacle is a matter that can be grooved into our spiritual lives. Some people prefer one method, some another. It can be said, however, on general principles, that those exercises of piety that can be performed in the chapel should be by all means done there. In addition to the habitual good which is inseparable from a devotional practise, there will be the special assistance of prayer in the physical Presence of God, with its attendant graces. Thus, meditation, examination of conscience, night prayers, and similar exercises, should be performed in the chapel. It is a matter of experience that greater attention, fervour, and profit inspire exercises performed there than those performed elsewhere. Outside of these general acts, we can go to see Our Lord on various pleas. Thus we can occasionally "drop in" just to see how Our Lord is getting on.

"I was thinking about You, Master. How are You getting along? Are You lonely? Do You find the time tedious? A blessing, Master, I am busy just now, but it is work for Thee, for Thy glory."

Again, we could salute Our Lord in this way: "I was just passing by, Jesus, and I thought I would

step in to see You, to show You I had not forgotten about You. A special grace, Jesus." And off we go, lighter in heart and richer by our act of love. At still another time we could slip in to the chapel to obtain light on some important project. We cannot just make up our mind; our intellect is cloudy; our will is vacillating, so undecided; our conscience is in doubt; so off we go to the tabernacle to tell Our Lord all about our worry, to ask His graces, to obtain His light, and be guided by His decision. We should, on general principles, never start a new work until we shall have seen Jesus about it, and had a good talk with Him. Another delicate act of courtesy, customary in religious houses, is to come before the Lord before going out of the house and to repair immediately to the chapel after coming in. Going, we ask Him to protect, to bless, and to guide us; returning, we beg pardon, thank Him for favours, and ask still another blessing. gracious custom is but an expression of deference to the Master of the House, a mark of worship to Our King, and one that, if faithfully followed, will obliterate many transgressions.

The question here arises as to the manner of employing the time given to the principal visit. One's favourite practises, discovered from years of sweet experience, which are in reality the motions of the Holy Spirit, are the best for prolonged visits to the Blessed Sacrament. We may, nevertheless, say that the fundamental manner in which to honour the

Real Presence is to divide our visit into sections of adoration, thanksgiving, reparation, and petition. This division is in conformity with the four ends of sacrifice and is one that gives the great glory to God as it, like the Mass, acknowledges God's dominion over us, and our dependence upon Him. The thoughts, lights, prayers, ejaculations, that accompany each of the ends of sacrifice, will make the time go by quickly and pleasantly. These four duties of the creature to his Creator should be satisfied in every visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration is inseparable from every attentive genuflection; thanksgiving is forced upon us at the ever fresh evidence of Our Saviour's kindness; reparation is the natural outcome of the clarifying holiness of the sanctuary; while the necessity of petition is before us at every moment of the day.

Sometimes, in spite of our best intentions, we find our visit a drudgery. Everything seems to conspire against us; distractions buzz about us; our mind wanders away on countless topics; our heart resembles an arid desert; the elements perturb us; sleep steals over us; the devil tempts us, with the result that we are inclined to say a quick "Amen" and be off to more congenial occupations. In cases like these, and even for the sake of variety, we should have at our disposal a certain number of little stratagems by which we can train ourselves to enjoy what would otherwise be a forced visit. The following plan is recommended. Impersonate

some character of the New Testament, who had the privilege of appearing in a scene with Our Lord. The rôles of Our Blessed Lady, St. John, St. Peter, St. Mary Magdalen, the woman at the well, the blind man of Jericho, the Lost Sheep—all these are easy to imitate. We have but to remember their doings, come before the tabernacle, impersonate their sentiments, words, and actions, and the time will fly with surprising rapidity while we elicit many meritorious acts.

Take the rôle of Our Lady for one. We are all called upon in one way or another to be a Mother to Jesus. He is, as with Mary, left to our keeping. We have to tend to Him, see to His wants, watch over Him, dress His Altar, illumine His dwelling. Let us enter into the spirit of this trust, and endeavour to treat Him with something of the love that His Mother lavished upon Him. Thus we can say: "My Jesus, what can I do for Thee? What gift dost Thou desire? Is it a prayer, a service of love, a work for the good of a soul? Tell me, Jesus." Then with His Mother we can sympathize with Him over the indifference of men. How often at Nazareth did not Jesus come back home weeping at some insult, ill-treated by a rude disbeliever? So also, now men pain Him by their indifference! Let us take His Mother's place and grieve with Him, repair men's ingratitude, and promise to make up for their neglect.

Another day we can stage the play of St. John

and Christ. Taking the part of St. John, we pretend to be Our Lord's favourite disciple; we would like to lean upon His bosom, asking Him to divulge to us the secrets of His love; we beg the favour of being allowed to sit with Him in His Kingdom, promising that we are ready, if it be necessary, to drink the chalice; then we ask the favour of standing by Him at the foot of the Cross, to receive as a dying bequest the care of His Blessed Mother. "I will look after her, Jesus. Tell Mary to consider me as her child. Let me, with St. John, pass my life in her sweet company; then let me, like St. John, go to the grave, preaching with my last dying breath Thy favourite Commandment of Charity."

The life of the Apostle St. Peter furnishes us with excellent prayers for visits. "Jesus, I want the key of Thy tabernacle so that I can open and lock the door of this Eucharistic Kingdom. I believe that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Please build upon this foundation-stone of Faith, a small Church of love for Thy Eucharistic Self, against which the gates of the world, the flesh, and the devil shall labour in vain. O Master, I am willing to die for Thee. Give me the grace to be generous if the sacrifice is to come."

After a fall, let us look appealingly to the golden door, and beg Our Master to take pity on us as He did on Peter, and convert us once more to His Heart by a glance of love. If then, the Master should ask us if we loved Him, if He should repeat His demand, we can say: "Master, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee in the Blessed Sacrament."

One of the best biblical characters for Eucharistic impersonation is St. Mary Magdalen. There is in her life that mixture of sin, repentance, love, and reward that suits wonderfully our tabernacle life. We are all sinners; some more, some less. Let us, then, imitate the Saint to whom the Son of God gave the first recorded proof of His glorious resurrection. After a fall from fervour, when we have denied Jesus for the pleasures of the world, let us creep into His banqueting room and before all the world begin to weep over our treachery, our lack of love. From His lips, we shall hear again the words: "Many sins are forgiven thee because thou hast loved much." Let us follow Him as Mary followed Him.

"What can I do for Thee today, Master? Can I send someone to keep watch before Thee? Can I drop a seed of knowledge concerning the happiness of frequent Communion?"

Then, with Mary, we can assist at the tabernacle as at the foot of the Cross, weeping over the insults, the ingratitude Our Master receives from the world. Let us be faithful to this practise of reparation that Our Saviour emphasized so much in His revelations to St. Margaret Mary. To the uninitiated, it may not appear much to sympathize with the Master in His Eucharistic sorrows, but such

sympathy brings to light the delicacy of our love, the sincerity of our affection; and all this is invariably rewarded, as it was in the case of Mary Magdalen, by some big grace. Let us ask that glorious penitent-apostle of love to obtain for us a true love of her Master, so that we may be permitted to share with her the glory of His resurrection.

The last impersonation we mentioned is that of the Lost Sheep. "Good Shepherd, I am a little stray lamb. I have wandered far from the fold, into the field of temptations, down into the valley of danger. My soul has been torn by briers of distraction; my feet are sore from wasted tramping. Good Shepherd, I am fast losing love for Thy pasturage, which is the tabernacle. Come after me. Seek Thy little lost lamb." Then the Good Shepherd will leave His ninety-nine fervent sheep to come in search of His wayward one, and on the way back the lost sheep will cling close to His shoulders, promising never to leave Him again.

Such are a few of the methods that can be used to draw us to the tabernacle. Let us not forget that the flesh is often weak, and that the difficulty of doing spiritual things proceeds precisely from our human nature. When, then, we experience hardship in filling in the prescribed time before the altar, let us gently force ourselves, by one way or another, to do that which our mind and will recognize every Christian should do in honour of the

Captive God. Before we conclude our visit, let us beg of Jesus an increase of faith, love, devotion, respect to the Blessed Sacrament, so that the next time we greet Him our dispositions may be much more pleasing in His sight than they were at this visit.

"Thank You, Jesus, for Your kindness," we can say as we turn to go. "Praised be the most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! Mother, take care of Jesus for me. Good-by, Jesus, I shall be back soon. Bless me, Master! Good-by Jesus!"

CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUAL READING

NECESSARY factor of every well-balanced spiritual life is found in what is called spiritual reading. The material for this, selected from treatises on virtues or the laws of the interior life, illustrated by the examples of the saints, acts as a tonic to the whole spiritual system. It furnishes the mind and heart with an excellent nourishment, one almost indispensable for any solid growth in holiness. Spiritual reading reveals the thoughts of great saintly writers, and fortifies the reader in the knowledge, admiration, and love of his rich, Christian heritage. Well-selected passages on these matters enhance the ideals of Christian virtue, imbuing the reader with the ambition to imitate what he understands was done by others. In general, good reading of this kind is the science of sanctity, without the knowledge of which we should be floundering and stumbling along a road of our own making, but not the road taught by Christ or trodden by His saints. To learn what goodness is, and how some have practised it, it is advisable that we obtain this knowledge from holy men, and the ordinary way to acquire this is by reading.

Let us take it for granted, then, that this habit forms already one of the component parts of our daily rule of life. It will be our duty to embellish the reading with Eucharistic flowers, so that this, as well as other exercises, may keep us in close touch with the tabernacle. All that we need is a little energy that will liquify our thoughts, so that they can flow to the altar at a moment's notice. We read, for instance, an article on some virtue. As the thoughts on this subject glide through our mind, we can reflect that after all there is no virtue that can be practised without the assistance of the Tabernacle God. Jesus is the Source of every virtue; He is the Incarnation of every Divine attribute. The children of men are powerless without His aid. Virtue is His gift, His Divine prerogative. He denies it to none that truly desire it and endeavour to acquire it; but they must realize that it emanates from Him, and the more they realize this fact, the larger participation will they have in this Divine quality.

"O Jesus, Virtue Personified, living in the tabernacle, help me to give Thee Thy due. I am so selfconceited. I fancy every small trait in me is the
result of my own unaided effort, whereas all the
while it was Thy Grace that, in spite of my many
proud oppositions, managed to do a little spiritual
work in my soul. O Master of Virtue, forgive me
for my insufferable pride. Humiliate me, if necessary, to make me understand that without Thee,
Who dwellest on the altar, I am nothing, worse than
nothing—for nothingness could not offend. I have
time and time again been guilty of sin. O Jesus, I

believe that here in the Eucharist is the sanctity of the saints, the purity of virgins, the heroism of martyrs, the living personification of all that is good and perfect."

Perhaps the particular virtue about which we happen to be reading is humility. Let our thoughts go bounding from our books to the lonely tabernacle where "Humility" dwells. "Jesus, Thou art the Divine Virtue of Humility Itself, a virtue so pleasing to God, so necessary and essential to the life of the soul. I am a creature groaning and aching with conceit and pride. Vanity oozes from me by a thousand different sores. I recognize my hideous state. I come to Thee, Virtue of Humility, and beg Thee to heal my festering wounds. Eradicate my pride, cauterize my wounds, and then pour over me the soothing balm of self-knowledge. Show me, Tabernacle Humility, that there is nothing so necessary for building up an edifice of sanctity as to be entirely emptied of self."

As we read on, we wonder how it is that, in spite of all our prayers and receptions of the sacraments, we are today practically at the starting point regarding the acquisition of this virtue. Others, whom we knew at the earlier stages of our career, are miles ahead of us on the path of sanctity. They have ever retained the freshness of their first ambition. The sweet odour of that generous resolution has still to leave them, while we, who had equal chances, are bedrossed and bedraggled with the dirt

and imperfections of the world. We must confess that our youthful fervour has decreased. Virtue does not mean so much to us now as it did before. What is the trouble? Listen! Did we hear a faint echo coming from the tabernacle? Perhaps it was an illusion; anyhow our conscience reminded us that Jesus from the altar could well say, "Christian soul, the reason you did not go ahead with the others was that you relied too much upon your own abilities. You did not make of Me, in the tabernacle, a confident of your heart's desires. You did not make all those rich Communions work sufficiently for your soul's good. Every time you went to Communion, I, the Virtue of Humility Itself, came into your heart and you rarely thought of considering Me under that title. Soul, if you wish to advance in this virtue, receive Me as Humility; offer My Humility in exchange for your pride; beg of Me the grace to practise this virtue for that particular day. Then at the close of the day, return to the Humility stronghold, the tabernacle, and ask Me to make amends for all your failures."

Still the reading continues. It annoys us in a way, to find out that there is so much to be learned about this poor, despised virtue, Humility.

"O Master, forgive me again for my blindness. I had been making of humility a virtue to my own likeness; in fact, my ideal of humility was, in reality, a secret way of fostering my pride. Master, I am but an infant, discovering the A B C of virtue.

My unconquerable pride has long since elevated me to a pedestal above my fellow beings, while in Thy sight, I was far, far below them. Teach me, humble Lord of the altar, teach me the science of Humility. Let the lessons that now exhale their delightful aroma from these pages, sink deeply and practically into my soul. O Master, how was it that Thou didst not punish me for daring to enter Thy Presence in my filthy garment of pride? Why didst Thou not bind me hand and foot, and cast me into eternal darkness? O humble King, Thy very humility is the best reproach to my pride. From henceforth, with Thy help, I shall try, with St. Augustine, to know myself in order to despise myself—to know Thee so that I can love Thee."

It goes without saying, that, whenever during our reading we encounter the name of "God," "Lord," "Saviour," "Jesus," these names should be the signal for immediate messages to the tabernacle. To neglect those opportunities would be failing to profit by special graces. It does not take much to do this, only a remembrance that His own dear Self is following us in our reading from the storehouse of all knowledge, the tabernacle. It needs but an extra realization of the wealth of meaning attached to the word "Lord," "Saviour"—it means but an intelligent pronouncing of His name, to send a communication to the altar at once, by a transient act of love.

Following this suggestion, we shall find Eucharis-

tic gems on nearly every page we read; and up in Heaven our thoughts of love will be inscribed in letters of gold upon another book which will be read in the hearing of all on the Day of Judgment.

The mere material words themselves can be utilized in our Eucharistic propaganda. A word is a participation of truth, which in itself is a participation of the Eternal Word, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. St. John narrates how "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God." Further on he says that "the Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us." If St. John were living he could continue his thought, his statement, that the Word lives with us now in the Blessed Sacrament. Let us, then, make a pact—that we wish every word we utter to salute the True Word-made "Eucharistic," and dwelling amongst us full of grace and truth. Let every word be an act of love flashing a message of affection to the Master. O, would that every letter of every word represented a Communion to be received tomorrow! "O Divine Word, give me the grace to read the book of love found in Thy tabernacle!"

The lives of the saints are favourite spiritual reading. Reading the history of a saint, we see principles put into action, theories applied to practise, virtue enshrined in facts. It encourages us to peruse the doings of such souls, because remembering the clay of which they were formed, we reflect that they were not so unlike ourselves, and what

they have done, we also can do. We see how they conquered self and gradually were sculptured into living images of the Divine Model, Jesus Christ. The likeness of Christ is seen in every saintly soul. Sanctity consists in union with, and imitation of, Jesus Christ. This union and imitation comes from the home of interior life, the altar. Let us adore Jesus Eucharistic in His saints. Let us congratulate Him on the good results of His labours. "Blessed Be God in His Angels and Saints!" The saints are God's handiwork even more than the tall mountain that lifts its head to the sky, or the multicoloured rainbow that embraces the earth.

Our Saviour worked hard in the formation of His saints. It meant the outpouring of grace after grace—graces of purification, of illumination, of sanctification. These graces were not for a single day, but had to be continued and increased during a long period of years. "Praised be the most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for the production of those rare flowers of sanctity that adorn the garden of the Church!"

But another thought of more practical value to ourselves should follow from our reading, and this is that we also are called by God to be saints. Souls nowadays are frightened by this thought. They consider a saint an altogether exceptional being, a freak of nature, a rare specimen belonging to an unknown century, but not to be found in modern times, and above all, in our own midst, or in our

own selves. The truth is that the saint should be the most ordinary person in the Church of God and the unsaintly, the exception; for sanctity merely means perfect Christianity, and we are all supposed to be Christians. Sanctity, narrowed down to the constituent elements, means perfect correspondence to grace, and who is there that can say this is impossible? If, for instance, we but correspond generously, faithfully, perseveringly, to all our Eucharistic graces, should we not be able to scale the heights of perfection and attain even to the mountain tops of sanctity? The saints, who excelled in correspondence to grace, say that there is grace enough in one Communion, if we but receive it properly, to turn a sinner into a saint. We go to Communion frequently. We have only ourselves to blame then, if the image of the Master is still faint and indiscernible in our souls.

The waves of grace that sweep down from the mighty cross at Mass are sufficient to purify the imperfections that stain our souls. Communion will come to fill us with the food of sanctity, and the breezes that blow about the altar will ever keep our hearts pure and redolent of Eucharistic love. A life built upon correspondence to the graces of the Blessed Sacrament, cannot fail to produce a soul like in all things to its Divine Model, Jesus, the Word made Eucharistic.

We may not be called by God to be public saints, to be distinguished from our fellow beings as the lighthouse on a dark shore. No, public saints of this kind are born for a purpose, appear but occasionally on the horizon of the Church, and are destined, through their extraordinary graces and privileges, to act as models for several generations. All, however, are invited by God to attain the humble, quiet, sacred regions of sanctity known to God alone. This is a state of perfection that is marked by no extraordinary grace or sign of the miraculous. To this all are called.

The principles, guiding one to union with God and imitation of Christ, are to correspond with generosity to grace; not to fear to do God's Will; to distrust self and rely entirely upon God. Let God be the motive power of our goodness. Let us do our best, make good use of every Eucharistic grace, and then slowly but surely we shall attain the end for which we were created. If asked what is to be the food for our journey, we may reply, that our source of strength, of propulsion, is stored up in the Blessed Sacrament. Through loving Jesus in the Eucharist we obtain the strength to bear the fatigue of the journey; the necessary heat, energy, and force to travel without ceasing along the road of God's love. It is the Blessed Sacrament that purifies us from the dust of the road, unites us to God, furnishes the highest motives to all our acts, and culminates the work by leading us into Heaven.

Let us beg of those saints, whose lives we are reading to intercede for us with the God of the Eucharist, so that He will give to us, as He did to them, the grace to become like unto Him.

"O Saint, whose life story is now evolving before my eyes, you must confess that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament was the Source of your sanctity, the Reason of your generosity, the Motive of your perserverance. You are now confirmed in grace and rejoicing in the vision of God. In your happiness do not forget us poor pilgrims who are still struggling along the roads of time. Heaven seems so far above us and so difficult of access. Help us to make good use of the Blessed Sacrament, so that It will be for us, as It was for you, the strong food by which we can go even to the mountain of God. Jesus Eucharistic, we beg of Thee, by the merits of this Saint, graciously to help us to become like to him in sanctity; so that by means of the Eucharist we may, like him, mount above this wicked world and come to see Thee, unveiled, face to face. for all eternity in Heaven. Amen."

CHAPTER X

THE BOOK OF NATURE

ST. PAUL says: "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made." (Rom. i. 20.) That is, man can from the nature of created things, rise to know the nature of God. So also an intelligent reflection on many beautiful and interesting objects of nature will help us to attain a deeper knowledge and love of Our Tabernacle God. We have but to open our eyes, and in the great book of nature we shall be able to read many secrets of God's love. Let us go for a stroll and, by way of experiment, let us see if we cannot remain in touch all the while with Our Tabernacle Lord.

We are no sooner out of doors than we realize the presence of the sun which floods the world with light and heat, and is an indispensable factor in the development of the plant kingdom. The sun is likewise the centre of a group of planets of which our world is but a small member. Astronomers tell of similar suns which may also be centres of their own respective groups. We have long grown accustomed to the presence of the sun and thus think little about the power behind it, the power that produced that great source of light and heat from out the abyss of nothingness. Honour and praise be to God for His great goodness in creating the world! and

to this God, Who lives with us on the Altar, be our adoration and tireless thanksgiving!

In the supernatural order there is also a great luminary, the source of light and heat, and the centre of our spiritual world. "Unto you that fear My name," says the prophet, "the Sun of Justice shall arise!" (Mal. iv. 2.) Christ Himself says: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.)

This truth is most clearly seen in the Eucharist. It is Christ Who, from His altar throne, radiates light and heat into the minds and hearts of all who believe in Him. Without Him there is no spiritual growth, no flowering of Christian virtue, no fruitfulness of a holy life. He, in the tabernacle, is the natural centre of our soul. All our thoughts, words, and actions should revolve around Him as satellites around the sun. When basking in the sunshine, let us think of this comparison, and pray the God of the supernatural world to send some beneficent rays of light into our minds, and allow His heat to penetrate into our cold hearts, so that both mind and soul may be filled with the knowledge and love of the Eucharistic Sun of Justice, Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

Let us breathe a prayer that the time will come when Christ will reign from the Eucharist. The rays of the material sun travel far and wide; all recognize its worth; all benefit by its presence. If only the darkness could be illuminated for many souls so that they could but see the Source of all good, so close to them and yet so far; so full of possibilities for their souls, and yet so neglected. Clouds of ignorance, of indifference, of dull tepidity gather between such souls and their true Sun, and make them go through their term of existence as in a darkened and cheerless land. Let us pray that such clouds may be dispelled, and that for all souls the Tabernacle Luminary may shine forth with a brilliancy and a warmth that will attract them to It.

After having considered the sun, we begin to examine some of the other works of nature. The trees and flowers, the grass in the fields, the birds and insects, the very atmosphere itself, all are visible messengers of the Most High pleading, beseeching us to raise up our thoughts from the things that are made, to Him Who made them.

How beautiful the earth appears decked out in its many trees! Tall, graceful, and well-proportioned denizens of field and forest, they circle the globe, adding a dash of colour to the landscape, affording relief to the eyes, shade to man and beast, and in general contributing to the beautiful harmony and perfection that characterize the handiwork of the Creator. The earth is a great altar erected to the glory of God; the trees are as many altar flowers setting off the throne of worship, and by their beauty winning the hearts of men to their

Maker. God thus decorates His own altar, but in the tabernacle He is dependent upon the good will of men. He has placed Himself at their mercy. If men so will it, He will receive honour; if not, He will remain neglected. As we gaze round about us, let us promise God that He shall not be left without the honour that is His; that we shall make it our duty to embellish His earthly throne; that we shall become zealous in the maintenance of the altar and all that pertains to Divine Worship.

Then there is our own little altar upon which God so often sits enthroned after Holy Communion. What is our zeal for its decoration? Do we show ourselves appreciative of the priceless favour accorded to us in Communion? Do we try to acquire those virtues befitting one who banquets at the table of God? Do we not live as partner of the Most High, fed on food denied to the angels?

"O God of the Altar, Who didst so beautifully decorate the throne of the world, help us by Thy grace to give Thee due honour on Thy tabernacle throne, and aid us to receive Thee fittingly in our hearts at Holy Communion!"

We pause on our way to remark the delicate little flowers. Sweet emblems of purity and innocence, how they charm us with their freshness, allure us with their daintiness and please us with their variety! All these wonders are the works of the Great, Silent Maker of the earth Who lives so close to us. He never speaks of His labours; He leaves them to appeal mutely to us for Him. As we look, then, we hear them saying: "You admire our beauty, our delicacy, our variety—you do well; but remember it is God Who made us and God awaits your adoration in yonder tabernacle. How powerful, how wonderful He must be, you can see from our beauty. Adore Him, for He is worthy of it; praise Him, it is His right; love Him, for on account of that love He made us for your sakes.

"Take us," they say, "to adorn the throne of Our King. We were made for Him and for you. Be not surprised! You, also, O Christian soul, were made for the glory of God. Do you fulfill the end for which God made you? How much of your talents do you give toward the service of our imprisoned Master? Are you an ornament in the sanctuary of the Church, or do you, by your unchristian life, bring shame upon His house and cause sorrow to your God?

"Become delicate in conscience," the flowers say; "pure as lilies in charity, red as roses in love, full of desire for martyrdom, purple as the violet in modesty and meekness. Open your hearts to God's grace as we do to His dew. O you that pass by, you are privileged; you can love God, we cannot. We were made for you; you were made for God. God lives for you; God hungers to come to you; God stays on earth to have you love Him. Do not

refuse Him. Fulfill the end for which you were made."

The grass itself on which we tread reminds us that it is as a carpet to the living ciboria of the Blessed Sacrament, which we are. God neglected nothing to honour us; let us neglect nothing to honour God. The grass is humble and quiet; let us be humble in our own sphere, content to do God's Will without outcry and ostentation. How many of our deeds, alas! are contaminated by the odour of vanity and pride that overspreads all we do and spoils the fragrance that they might otherwise send up to God!

"Humble grass," we say, "reproach us no longer. We intend to do our duty quietly and unnoticed, and we shall strive to prove ourselves worthy of the great honour of being the living tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament."

Suddenly the birds regale us with delightful music. Their "tweet, tweet," sounds pleasantly in the summer air. "Love God! Praise God!" they sing. "Love the Eucharist! Adore the Eucharist! God made us to quicken a sluggish world, to enliven it with our songs, so that men, aroused from day dreams, would be induced to direct their thoughts to Our Maker, their God, Whose terrestrial throne is on the altar."

As we watch these happy creatures always full of song, flying to and fro, lively and cheerful, we sigh and wish that we could be as happy as they, that our hearts might be ever filled with the music of God's love. Would that like birds we could fly swiftly through space to distant lone tabernacles where God is unadored, and repair by our homage the ingratitude of men! Would that we could bring life and happiness into souls deadened by sin, into mansions where Jesus never enters.

"Little bird, come, take a message for me. Fly away to the nearest tabernacle and tell God that I wish to be ever united to Him. Thank Him for His kindness in doing so much for me. Beg Him to give me grace to acquit myself as faithfully of my obligations as you do of yours."

At this moment an insect, barely discernible in the grass and clay, attracts our attention; small, insignificant, yet a breathing creature; minute, yet perfect in all its functions. What a wealth of God's glory is manifested by that little creature! What a depth of Divine Wisdom is herein displayed! No amount of human ingenuity could ever turn out a creature so small and so complete.

"Jesus, Thou art a wizard of love, stealing our hearts by means of a little insect. Thy Wisdom, Thy Power, Thy Love—all are resplendent in this small ant running between those blades of grass. Would that we could correspond with Your countless love! Thou hast filled the earth with all such creatures for man's pleasure and benefit! Master, I adore Thee in this insect. Let me imitate its humility. Notice how it is hidden from the exterior

world. Quietly and without ostentation it does its work. I also do something, but often with a blaze of trumpets and at street corners, so that all may see how good I am. Master, make me humble; draw me down to the dust; curb my proud spirit, so that I may live unknown and unnoticed, but happy in the thought of doing my duty in a way pleasing to Thy holy Will."

In general, every leaf in the book of nature bears the mark of God's autograph. Everything that we see round about, be it ever so small, or be it mountanous in size, speaks to us of the God Who designed and realized it. To the soul enamoured with the love of God, an inscription is written in letters of gold upon every book of nature's library "Made by Jesus." Just as manufacturers like to give evidence of their productions with a hope of influencing business, so also our Saviour, as God, leaves His autograph everywhere, hoping that it will enkindle the fire of love in our hearts. It may be objected that Christ, as Our Saviour, did not actually design the works of nature; but in this the objector forgets the immense resources of the Eucharist. If Christ be Our Saviour, and that only from the time of His Incarnation, nevertheless Christ is always God, as He Himself stated: "Before Abraham was made, I am"; and thus to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament we can give the credit for all the varied beauties of nature.

"God made us!" say the trees. "God made us!"

say the birds—God made us! Love God," say all creatures, taking up the song and joining in the chorus of universal praise and thanksgiving.

Remember, man, that thou art bound to love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, thy whole soul, thy whole mind, and thy whole strength. Jesus in the Eucharist is true God. Therefore, O man, thou art bound to love Jesus in the Sacrament of His affection with all the powers of thy soul and thy body. Go out, then, into the city and country with eyes open to the true aspect of Divine creation, with heart ready to respond to the heavenly call; and you will behold the magnificent spectacle of the whole world glistening and sparkling with Divine Love, making you, in spite of yourself, become passionately enraptured with the Lord of all in the Eucharist.

The atmosphere itself plays its rôle in the conquest of souls by Christ. Its many changes, its sweet perfume, which God alone could invent—all these would make us adore its Author hidden in the tabernacle, whence He rules the forces of the air.

The aroma that is noticeable in the air is nature's incense arising from the altar of the earth to its Maker. It should lead us to think of the incense that we should waft towards Our God. Would that the sweet odour of Christ ever ascended from us to the Heavenly Father. Moreover, as our bodies live by reason of the air, so also our souls should

frequently breathe the atmosphere of the sanctuary; otherwise, our poor souls, suffocated for want of proper respiration, will gradually languish and finally become as dead, so far as Eucharistic piety is concerned. O blindness of men that prevents them from understanding that they will never learn to love the God of the altar by remaining away from His actual Presence! Personal contact is a necessary condition to proper sacramental devotion.

When the fountains of the clouds send their rain down upon the earth, we should be on the alert to make countless offerings to Our Friend. Let every drop represent an act of love, telling Christ of our affection. Let every drop as it patters on the ground be a Host going to a human heart. Would that every watery diamond might grow eloquent and with thrilling voice call upon men to receive the Crucified frequently in Holy Communion.

"O Saviour, water my soul with Thy grace; it is so dry, parched from lack of Divine consolation. My Communions are insipid; my visits are almost torture because of the aridity of my soul. Saviour, spare me; I am a child; feed me on the milk of Thy grace until such time as I can become strong."

When in winter the drops of rain congeal to descend in feathery flakes, ere they reach the earth, let us welcome the angelic messengers by saluting each one as a host, wishing that the whole spiritual world be as white, by reason of countless Communions, as the earth covered by its snow.

"'Tis cold, bitterly cold, but not half as frigid as the coldness of men towards Thee in the Eucharist. O Saviour, how is it that we treat Thee so unkindly? Melt our frozen hearts with the fire of Thy love. Burn Thy name deep into us so that we can't forget Thee. What diabolical spirit is it that makes us so icy when Thou, the furnace of love, comest into our hearts at Communion? O Master, bring this miserable state of affairs to an end so that a warm welcome, a true welcome, be Thine at Thy entrance."

When we feel the cold cut us, let us offer it up in a spirit of penance so that some heretofore indifferent soul may be attracted by the warmth of the Blessed Sacrament. Let us offer such suffering in preparation for our next Communion. "O Master, I do not mind this intense cold; only let me give Thee a warm heart tomorrow."

We could go on almost indefinitely wirelessing our thoughts of love from the objects of creation to the Creator, but let us be satisfied for the present with such as have come to our notice. The only resolution we should take is to be ever on the alert to make rapid connections between the creature and the Creator in the Eucharist, so that whatever we see, hear, or feel in this beautiful world of ours may be an occasion for us to raise our thoughts and hearts in grateful acknowledgment to Jesus Christ, the God of Heaven and earth, in the Sacrament of His Love.

CHAPTER XI

A STROLL THROUGH THE CITY

SUPERFICIALLY SPEAKING, we can hardly expect to derive much Eucharistic nourishment from a walk through the crowded streets of a busy city. When in the country, it was comparatively easy to delve into the secret places of nature and unearth many precious jewels of love; but in the city all seems to turn man's heart from God. The bustle of business, the rapidly moving traffic, the congested, overflowing throng of men and women all intent upon work and pleasure, the rows of high buildings, the hard pavements—all these tend to make man think of himself and his material concerns, but not of God in a humble tabernacle.

It is consoling, however, to think that even in the busiest sections of the most crowded streets one can find sufficient matter for Eucharistic meditation. If God bequeathed the Blessed Sacrament to the souls of men for the purpose of aiding them on the journey to Heaven, then those immersed in the sea of civic life were to be given the necessary grace to enable them to keep in constant union with God dwelling close to them. God knew of our modern social conditions. Cities with all their nerves and arteries of life were just as present to the mind of Christ as were the smiling fields and snowy mountains of Palestine. Men and women of busi-

ness, their employees, and all who dwell within the confines of largely populated areas, have souls to be saved, to be sanctified. If the Eucharist, then, was to be a means of grace, of hope, of light to the people of the land washed by the Mediterranean and sentinelled by the mountains of Lebanon, the same Sacrament is to help those residing in our modern towns of office buildings, paved streets, automobiles, and electric cars.

Let us go for a walk and see, by way of experiment, if we cannot apply the alchemy of love to the commercial and artificial aspect of modern cities, that will gild their sordid outlines with the gold that glistens from the sanctuary's Treasure.

As we saunter along the main thoroughfare, our attention is first attracted by the tall, substantial edifices of brick and stone. How easily do they lift their massive frames to the sky, and how mightily do they tower over the pedestrians below! There is in these buildings the lesson of solidity and nobility of character. Our souls should be as firmly founded on virtue as those structures are on stone and cement. If we all, for instance, had our faith in the Real Presence more solidly established, would we not erect aloft a dwelling of truly Christian magnificence, a structure of spiritual wealth, such as would be the admiration and envy of all non-Catholic beholders? A small, insignificant house built on the sands attracts more pity than admiration and envy. In like manner if all we can raise to the glory of God be but a small display of devotion towards the wonderful Sacrament of the Altar, then the non-believer passes us by with feelings akin to pity, strongly mingled with contempt.

Many of the buildings round about are fitted out for offices. In these offices there is a place for everything. Each separate matter has its peculiar interests. In fact, it is because the office is systematized, that the work goes on easily and successfully. We lose in the business of our souls because we lack proper coördination and adjustment of our activities. We busy ourselves with the right exercises, if you will, but at the wrong time or in the wrong manner. Take our Communions as a case in point. A good Communion can work wonders in our souls if we are properly prepared and dispositioned, but many of our Communions lose their efficacy through the lack of earnestness in our desires, of fervour in our preparation, and of interest in our thanksgiving. Could we not systematize our manner of receiving Communion? Let us promise to set apart at least five minutes, the eve of our Communion, in preparation for the morrow's banquet. Up to that happy moment all the time not spent in necessary sleep would be an unending succession of meditations and ejaculations, by which we shall make ready for the Eucharistic Guest.

As our walk continues we cannot help remarking

the energy with which the men of the world give themselves up to the purpose of their lives-to achieve success in their respective undertakings. All their talents, their skill, their experience are directed towards that goal of commercial life-"Success." Otherwise they are doomed to drudgery or destined to fall into ruin. Do we see the lesson of this trait of business life? Surely it is not difficult. If we wish to make progress in the all-important affair of our salvation, we must employ the entire energies of soul and body. Why cannot we tell Our Lord that we shall trifle with Him no longer and that from henceforth every nerve of our body, every faculty of our soul, will be devoted to the quest of spiritual riches. Our energies we can invest in as many Eucharistic bonds as possible. If we think that a little judicious reading will permit us to take better advantage of the spiritual market, why, by all means, let us use it. If an extra visit can send our dividends soaring up to the skies, then let such a visit be made. In short, in the trading for eternity, no ruse should be neglected. We must be as wise in our generation as the children of this world in theirs; and if they profit by every means to win success, we also, in our Eucharistic speculations, must leave no device untried until the manifold graces of this wonderful Sacrament endow our souls with innumerable riches. God intends all to become wealthy with the wealth of the Blessed Sacrament, but before this can be done, we must

work daily and hourly until what is His can become ours.

Window displays are a special feature of city life. By the aid of simple materials, competent window dressers are able to obtain amazing results in the way of arresting attention so that passers-by may come inside and purchase. Almighty God has His handicraft displayed on the highways and byways of life; but we are so engrossed in our own selves and all that is material that we fail to perceive the beauty, the harmony, and the perfection of the work of God; and failing to recognize the handiwork, we equally fail to acknowledge or adore its Maker. We should train ourselves to be of a more reflective turn of mind. Let us look up to the clouds that sweep majestically and grandly across the blue vault of the sky. Somewhere up there dwells the Maker of nature, the One Who feeds the birds, clothes the lilies, and provides for us all. The beautiful curtain veils Heaven from our eyes and half hides, half reveals the glories of our eternal abode. Oh! that we could keep our eyes ever fixed on our heavenly home! There is a place there for us. If we could only take advantage of the immense resources of the Blessed Sacrament, then earth would be itself a preparatory heaven, and the real Heaven would draw nearer and nearer. Ah! let us during our pilgrimage on earth, honour the God of the tabernacle in such a manner that He will deal leniently with us when He is to exchange

the meek garments of the Host for the severe robes of Judge.

Transportation facilities claim our recognition. Electric cars, automobiles, bicycles, airships-all these have been invented for the convenience of man. How often have we thought of thanking God for permitting such vehicles? It is surely a wonderful sight to see a ponderous contrivance, like an electric car, propel itself along the street and up the hills. Our ancestors seeing this would stand in amazement and wonder if it were not the work of enchantment. God has allowed man to make use of his intelligence in order to obtain greater comfort on earth. To God, then, on the altar throne be our praise and thanksgiving for this and other modern improvements. If we have learned to harness the forces of nature for the swift abridgment of distance, then the God Who permitted these wonders should be fittingly honoured and adored. He is waiting for an expression of our gratitude in His earthly abode, the tabernacle. This is the Maker-Inventor Who lifted the clouds of darkness from the intellects of men, and gave them the clue to some of the secrets of electricity, that they might be of service to the world. "King of the magnetic world, we salute Thee; we thank Thee; may we use these gifts to come to Thee!" The cars that so rapidly convey their passengers from the busy whirl of city life to the quiet nooks of the rural districts are moved by the current that flows from

the power house. The Tabernacle is the power house of our souls; from It go out all the electric volts of the spiritual life. We live, we move, we have our spiritual being in proportion as our communication with the God of the Tabernacle is checked or unbroken. The freer, the swifter the correspondence between our souls and Christ, the stronger will be the life and action of our souls. Let us form the resolve to remain constantly in direct communication with the Blessed Sacrament, never to allow the messages of love to be interrupted, so that the current of God's grace may flow on easily and copiously.

As the cars, automobiles, and other vehicles glide quickly past, we can invite the Guardian Angels of their passengers to salute the King in His Palace when they come to the nearest church. The church should be regarded as the domicile of the King. In the mind of God all roads converge to the central dwelling occupied by His Divine Majesty. Trains, cars, and carriages lead from one royal seat to another. Streets in towns, roads in the country, are intended to facilitate the movement and intercourse of men, generally to permit their livelihood. but also to have all mankind render convenient honour to Him Who is the Author of the family and the state, Whose palace is the church and Whose throne is the tabernacle. "Guardian Angel, I cannot leave my work just now. You are to pass by the palace of the Master. Salute Him for me;

tell Him to send back a blessing to His disciple working by the sweat of his brow."

Before our stroll is over, let us consider the various elements of the ever-undulating sea of humanity. Men and women, young and old, good and bad, come within the range of our vision and disappear from sight, leaving us to fathom the impressions they have made. The Christian side of a visit to the city means the contact with souls, souls redeemed by the Precious Blood of the Immaculate Lamb; souls to be enriched by the Treasure of the altar. In the crowd that surges to and fro, we pick out specimens of manly dignity. Such men as these are the pride of their mothers' hearts, the best assets of a community, and the strength of the whole city. What glory would not redound to the honour of God if all these men who profess to be Catholics would only be living exponents of the creed they profess! If the majority of our Catholic laymen would only harken to the voice of the vicar of Christ and receive Communion frequently, who could begin to estimate the good that would result? Someone has said that if all the Catholics in the world were to practise their religion as it should be practised, then the rest of the world would become Catholic. Let the majority of the laymen of a parish become frequent Communicants and we should soon see many conversions follow. Why cannot these men, who are so successful in their business life, apply the business way of producing successful Catholic laymen through the medium of frequent Communion.

Mothers join in the crowds that flow on uninterruptedly past us. How few mothers, relatively speaking, realize their grand mission of rearing and educating their children to become champions of the faith, defenders of whom the Church might justly be proud? Given true mothers and behold! the secret of the reformation of modern society. A good mother means a good son, a good family, and where you multiply such sons and families by the thousands, the result needs no questioning. Let mothers imbibe the graces that flow from the Mass, Holy Communion, and friendship with the Dweller in the tabernacle, and we should soon behold the fruit of virtue in the souls of their children. Young souls that are nourished in a spiritual soil that is irrigated by the fountains of the Saviour attain a fulness of perfection, a degree of virtue, and delicacy of beauty unknown to those reared outside the garden of the Eucharist.

The true Catholic mother, fashioned after the heart of Our Lord, cherishes the desire of having at least one of her children consecrate his or her life to God. In old Catholic days it was the ambition of every mother to raise a son that would be able to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, or a daughter that would become the spouse of Christ. We might muse regretfully over the vocations that are lost when we watch the crowd whirl gayly by. "The har-

vest is great but the labourers are few." Too much pleasure, too few Communions; hence, the supernatural loses its attraction for young souls. God's voice is not heard, and the call comes and goesunheeded. Perhaps, on the Day of Judgment, certain mothers will be surprised to learn that they are responsible before God for the loss of vocations that robbed Him of His glory, and caused souls that would otherwise have been high in Heaven, to occupy a place in the land of pain and sorrow.

Before we turn away from the multitude, let us refresh our gaze by stopping to peer into the face of a young child who has acquired the habit of frequently going to Holy Communion. Artists may dream of the ideal in earthly beauty; they may even try to make the canvas spring into life with a picture of the face of their dreams; but no human hand can produce the aspect of heavenly beauty that shines upon the countenance of the holy Catholic child. Innocence, purity, candour, simplicity, union with God-we imagine we are looking at an angel. This is one of the darling little lambs of Our Lord. They come into His pasture, the sanctuary, and are fed with His Own Body. Pure as angels, they grow up as lilies in the midst of a world that is tainted by the odour of sin. Oh! would that more older folk could understand the necessity of allowing children to come unto Him Who made the heart of a child for Himself! Oh! the folly of a world that does not recognize its God! It

plunges headlong to its own destruction, races to the abyss of ruin, while graces in abundance lie unheeded on every side.

"To be near Thee, O my God, and yet so far—what blindness! What ignorance of the priceless treasure of the Eucharist! O God, have pity on an unbelieving generation and give it the mind to know, the heart to love, Thee."

At the foot of the nearest tabernacle we conclude our stroll through the city. We come to thank God for all His love in providing us with every convenience, and we ask pardon for those who refuse to honour Him as their King in His altar home. "Jesus, King of home and society, we adore Thee, we thank Thee. Grant us the grace to recognize Thy social reign. Permit us to live in Thy Kingdom on earth in order to render Thee every possible honour. Mayest Thou, from Thy Eucharistic throne, rule over all men! "Thy Kingdom Come!"

CHAPTER XII

SICKNESS

SICKNESS, under one form or other, is an almost inevitable visitor to every home. It comes sooner than expected, stays longer than wanted, and departing, threatens to return. Judged from a natural standpoint, sickness appears as a cloud depriving life of its sunshine; but once let the light of Christianity rise over the mists of suffering, and the clouds of discontent disappear before the genial sense of God's love and the brightness of His grace. Christianity has this effect, because, accepted with proper dispositions, sickness becomes a gift rather than a loss, something to be longed for rather than to be despised.

There are peculiar qualities about suffering and sickness that make them stepping-stones to God's favour and sources of sanctification to all concerned, whether it be to those who groan under the cross or those who strive to ease the burden of the bearer. For the sufferer, Christianity holds out the consoling confirmation that suffering is a token of God's special love. The authority for this astonishing paradox is none other than the words of the Scripture, "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth." God loves all souls; so if Scripture singles out afflicted souls as being loved above the ordinary, there is no cause to mourn over afflictions. It

seems as if the All-loving, regarding chosen souls Whom He wishes to draw closer to His Sacred Heart, graciously permits them to feel a little of His own Cross.

The Way of the Cross was the one road the Infinite Wisdom of God selected out of countless other paths; for, without doubt, other paths could have led up to the celestial kingdom. But because the Son of God purposely chose the thorny Way of Calvary, He consecrated this road for all time, as the Divine Way to Heaven. It is hard to human nature and to the world it is incomprehensible, but then the world's wisdom is folly in the sight of the Allwise.

When the weight of the Cross is pressing upon our shoulders, let us thank the Crucified Dweller in the tabernacle for His condescension in choosing us to participate in His way of life. "O Jesus, the world pities me in this trial, but I know it is going to fashion me to some semblance of Thee. How could I claim to be a true Christian, nay more, Thy special follower, and not bear the bruises of Thy Cross? O mangled Victim of the Altar, I thank Thee for deigning to admit me into Thy inner circle of friends."

The discomfort, the pains, the long monotony of the sickroom, can all be transformed into spiritual flowers to be offered the Sanctuary. The thorns of pain and the briars of illness can enclose many a flowerlike act, exhaling perfume of the purest love, as each new twitch of pain, of discomfort, adds to the intensity of our suffering. Oh, the joy and the consolation in the thought that we can here and now offer these up to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for His glory, to make Him better known and loved! Forthwith what was ugly and repulsive blossoms into flowers of most delicate hue—presents fit for a King, and so to the King they go. "All for Thee, Sacred Heart of Jesus, all for Thee!"

"Master! please accept my sufferings of today. I offer them to make Thee a little better known and loved. I have often longed to do something to further devotion to Thee in the Eucharist, but these wishes met with but scant success. My words were plentiful enough, easily coined, but devoid of results. Now, Master, I have something besides mere words to offer Thee, something solid, substantial; it is Thine own secret, the Cross. Christ, Thou didst change the world with Thy Cross. Please accept my little share of It as the ransom price for more Eucharistic souls. Master, if Thou dost so will, I agree to suffer here, quietly and unknown, on condition that every minute of my suffering be productive of greater love for Thee. All for Thee, then, Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!"

In time of sickness we have a rare opportunity of offering a worthy apology to the God Whom we so often have slighted by our irreverence. During the balmy days of good health, we thought very little of ill-prepared Communions, hurried thanks-givings, and scores of omitted visits; but now, tied down to our sick bed, we have ample time for reflection on the ingratitude, the unkindness, the disloyalty of it all. "O slighted Saviour, pardon me; I knew not what I did. Please accept this sickness in reparation for past indifference to Thee in the Blessed Sacrament. This cross is my punishment, I deserve it, but I shall sweeten it and lessen its weight by bravely accepting and recognizing its justice. Strike! Master, I am ready; but as I bow before the blow, I offer it to Thee out of love."

Complaining will not ease our weary bodies and tired hearts. It only tends to intensify the realization of our misfortune; so let us exclude it altogether from our sickroom. Let patience, resignation to God's Will, humble recognition of a just retribution, be our inseparable companions in the temporary deprivation of health. Even though our eyes rain tears, let us remember that every tear will be rewarded in the land of Eternal Sunshine Jesus invites us to look upon Him in the tabernacle. He was called upon to suffer. Pain, anguish, torture—all these were compounded in His chalice. Look at Him now, gloriously triumphant over death, happy beyond conception in the brightness of God's glory. "Be patient!" He cries out to us. "Bear your cross bravely; it is only for a time. Keep your eyes fixed on the tabernacle. I am with you to encourage, to sustain you on your journey up to Calvary. One day together with Me in glorious happiness, you will learn to thank Me for this cross that furnished you with numberless occasions of merit."

The hours and days drag along with painful slowness. The atmosphere tends to become monotonous, tedious, insipid. Let us quicken it by the fresh breezes of energetic reflection. We long to be actively doing something for the Lord; but now let us judge of our mistakes in the past. We wasted so much of our time before. Countless Eucharistic opportunities like beautiful flowers were trodden down by our busy feet, as we rushed here and there in pursuit of trifles. How our conduct must have displeased the God of the Altar. Our Eucharistic life was like an ill-kept garden, choked with the weeds of indifference, mangled by cruel disrespect, robbed of beauty by unnecessary distractions-a sad sight to the One Who had hoped, by means of His copious Eucharistic dew and warm tabernacle sunshine, to bring to our soul beauty and grace and perfection. "O Master-gardener, give me back my health and I will try to serve Thee. My endeavour, my ambition shall be to increase in knowledge, love, and service of Thee in Thy Adorable Sacrament. Give me back my health, Master, and I will live to love Thee; live to make Thee loved; live to Thee to die to myself; live with Thee on earth, so that dying I may begin to live with Thee in eternity."

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To those entrusted with the care of the sick, comes the consolation of many precious deeds of merit, and a special claim to the friendship of the Sacred Heart. Because the sick are the particular friends of the Divine Crucified, any favour done them ultimately reaches Christ Himself. For this reason it is a privilege to be permitted to do something for a sufferer. Let those who nurse the sick behold Christ in the object of their ministrations. To Christ, then, in His suffering member, will go all their acts of kindness. Behind the wan visage of their patient they can see, with the eye of Faith, the grateful countenance of the Sweet Saviour. To be able to repay the Master is in itself a motive for alacrity in the attentions bestowed upon the sick. When nurses, angels of Divine Charity, come on the wings of mercy to and from the sickroom, let them regard it as a Sanctuary, housing a soul dearly loved by Christ.

Every visit thus paid out of a pure motive to this Sanctuary will radiate love, and be a clamour to God for recompense; it will be a deed indelibly inscribed upon the Book of Life. "All for Thee, Sacred Heart of Jesus!" each can say as she hastens in answer to a patient's call. It is displeasing to be so abruptly disturbed, so often called away from congenial occupations; but what of it? "The Master calls, and in obedience to His Voice, I come."

We should be delighted to do something for our

neighbour. The Victim of our Mass, the Food of our soul, the Friend of our visit thought so much of this very sick person that He suffered agonies and endured all manner of torture, even death itself, for him. True, we do not minister in sickness directly to the soul, which Christ had primarily in view, but we care for the tabernacle of the soul, the human body, the masterpiece of God's creation. God dwells therein; or if He does not, He can be brought to dwell there. Hence the body is precious, well worthy of our attention. Moreover, our attention to the body is not without its effect upon the soul. How often has not the quiet, modest behaviour of a nurse, breathing the sweet odour of virtue, awakened a whole train of pious thoughts in the mind of the sufferer? Nurses like these, who realize the supernatural possibilities and responsibilities of their calling, sometimes do more good than the most talented of preachers. The good nurse is a living exponent of her Faith, a visible model of the value of virtue, an eloquent reminder to the beholder of higher and nobler things.

Another thought for sickness is that the body which we so tenderly nurse is going to be the actual tabernacle of Christ on the morrow. By our attentions, then, we help dress the altar for the Eucharistic God. We strive to bring back the blush of beauty to the pale cheek, to restore vigour to the weakened limbs; to brighten the dull eyes and coax back the appetite for food, all in order to make

the earthly temple more fitting to do honour to its heavenly visitor, Jesus, in Holy Communion.

Even if the patient be not of our faith, the Eucharistic motive can be there just the same. We can then be precursors of the tabernacle Messiah. From all eternity the Lord has been promised to this poor soul growing up in the darkness of heresy. Through various obstacles this coming has been hindered. If we now, by our kindness, our ministrations, slowly, quietly, bring first one glimmer of light, then another, into that clouded atmosphere, we may eventually be the means of the Sun of Justice shining with the full Majesty of the Eucharistic Splendour in another soul. It will be prudent to say little by word, preaching rather by the eloquence of modesty, union with God, and cordial charity.

All that these reflections teach us is the necessity of being well penetrated with the Eucharistic atmosphere before, and during, the time we approach our patients. The aroma of the sanctuary can adhere so inseparably and so efficaciously to our person that our very presence in the sickroom will bring a breath of that air that is peculiar to the altar. All this supposes frequent, fervent Communions, regular visits from day to day, and many a thoughtful message of love to the sanctuary, as we move to and fro in the multiple occupations of an active life. When we feel dry and notice how distracted from God we have become, it is time to

go quietly away and refresh ourselves for a few moments in the sweet presence of our Eucharistic God. Concentrated love, fervent aspirations can transform us, after a few minutes, into Christians dear to the Heart of Christ. It will not take long to tell our love to God, to breathe a plea for forgiveness; and we shall come away laden with Eucharistic gifts.

True Charity is proved through a long sickness. Perseverance, attendance in spite of the monotony, the tediousness, the complaints of a long-drawn-out cure, will eventually prove the truth of our protestations of love for God. A concluding prayer in the sickroom can be: "O Master, Divine Physician, teach me in sickness and in health to look always towards Thee for inspiration, resignation, and imitation. Teach me to think of Thee and to love Thee as much in the midst of sickness as in the days of health. Help me to appreciate Thy sufferings, so that, moulded in the crucible of Thy love, I may better understand the value of the Eucharist."

CHAPTER XIII

BENEDICTION

NE of the most beautiful devotions of the Church in honour of the Blessed Sacrament is that of Benediction. In this ceremony the Host is freed from the captivity of the tabernacle and enthroned in a golden, sun-rayed monstrance, where, from the midst of a circle of light and flowers, Christ, the tabernacle King, graciously gives audiences to all His subjects. Perhaps no rite in the whole liturgy of the Church is so simple and so touching as this. It shows the loving kindness of Our Lord, Who permits Himself to be handled at His creatures' will and allows Himself to be exposed to the gaze of the multitudes who might make use of His condescension to subject Him to indignity. Christ seems to delight in this phase of His Eucharistic existence, for it shows Him in the true relation which He bears to His flock. He sees them in humble adoration at His Feet; He listens to their hymns of praise; He hears their petitions; and then, concentrating His love, He pours it all out upon them in a paternal blessing. How often have not non-Catholics, viewing such a scene, been moved by feelings of admiration and a sense of loneliness, to exclaim: "O would that we could believe even as those Catholics do!" and often their heartfelt cry is rewarded by the priceless gift of faith.

We, ourselves, grow to love more and more, the rite of Benediction. We behold Christ so plainly; we see Him treated in a manner so becoming His Royal Majesty; we feel at ease in His Presence; we become conscious of His paternal interest. Is it any wonder, then, that we become attached to it, and count all our opportunities of assisting at it among the most precious of our lives. All this is delightful, especially when Christ sheds abroad the grace of devotion, and the gladdened worshippers feel themselves the courtiers of Heaven. May God be infinitely praised for all His tabernacle riches! In this of Benediction He reveals anew the wealth, the tenderness, and the wisdom of His Sacred Heart. May we learn to treasure this gift of the Eucharist at its true worth; may we appreciate it at its proper value; may we live to understand, to realize its purpose, and to love the Saviour Who made it a reality.

The Spaniards who, as a people, are noted for their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, have the quaint custom of calling Our Lord, "His Divine Majesty." (Su Divina Majestad.) They announce Benediction or Exposition by the notice that "His Divine Majesty" will give Benediction or will be exposed for their adoration at such and such a time. It would be desirable that this interesting and most suitable custom should spread through-

out our land. Let us see if we cannot obtain a greater love for the ceremony of Benediction. "His Divine Majesty will give audience to His people at half-past seven this evening." Thus the heralds proclaim the glad news throughout the city. "Come to the throne room. Get ready to adore your King, to praise Him for His kindness. Prepare your petitions and count upon a royal reception."

The time appointed soon arrives. The royal chamberlain, the priest, clad in appropriate robes, ascends the steps leading to the throne. With reverent hand he unlocks the portals of the tabernacle; the golden doors swing upon their hinges; Christ, the King, attired in garments of snowy white, ascends His throne, and seated aloft, faces His people. Hereupon the organ bursts forth in strains of solemn, yet glad acclaim; the priest bows low and wafts above, clouds of sacred incense; the air is filled with the welcome of grateful hearts, and the melody of glad voices; and over the priest and people steals a sense of the wonderful Presence. It is the Benediction of God.

O let us make use of this occasion to offer tribute to Our King. Let us summon all the faculties of soul and body, to declare our allegiance to the Almighty; "Thou art Our King" we can say. "To Thee be the unstinted worship of our whole being. Let this incense, which wreathes its way up to Thee, be a symbol of our generous service. Like this

perfumed cloud, may our lives always send forth a fragrance to Thy throne."

Let us marshall all our faculties, for service of Our King saying: "Take, O Divine Majesty, our intelligence; it is Thy gift—the one that resembles Thee the most. Henceforth we consecrate this Divine faculty to Thy worship. When we shall search out the secrets of the wisdom, and strive to master the problems of the natural world, we shall lay the first fruits of our researches at Thy feet. We promise Thee, O liege Lord, that Thou shalt be the main object of our search. In all, we shall study Thy Divine nature, Thy personality, Thy attributes, Thy words, and Thy gifts. Oh grant that our intelligence may never admit a science displeasing to Thee; let no man deceive us by vain philosophy. O humble Sovereign, may pride never infect our minds and contaminate its store. From all these evils we beseech Thee, deliver us!

"Accept our will, O Sire; it is Thine, purchased by Thy most Precious Blood. It possesses the prerogative of freedom, but that freedom is to be devoted to Thy honour. We dedicate ourselves forever to Thy shrine. Our wishes, our thoughts, our determinations, will be centred in Thy tabernacle; we shall begin nothing without Thee, we shall refer all to Thee; and when our work is done, we shall hasten back to Thee to lay all at Thy Feet.

"Our hearts, Dear King, is one of the treasures

that we may call our own; but when we consider Thee exhausting Thy own dear Heart for the sake of us, what else can we do but dedicate our own hearts entirely and irrevocably to Thee? To win our elusive and fickle hearts, Thou didst suffer the cruel torments of Calvary. It would indeed be ingratitude if we obstinately refused Thee what Thou dost so yearn for. Alas! our hearts are small, imperfect, hardly worthy of notice; but they contain at least a few sparks of love, and these are for Thee.

"Our conscience, O Divine Master, would fain do its part in Thy Kingdom. This delicate faculty must be rendered sensitive to the faintest breezes that emanate from Thy altar gardens.

"O Master, grant me the grace of keeping my conscience constantly trained to detect the slightest whisper of Thy grace, to perceive the faintest odour of Thy heavenly perfume, and to notice the tiniest flowers of Thy love. Guide my conscience to protect itself from sin, and strengthen it to suffer all manner of torment rather than soil itself by mortal sin. Would that my conscience were so Eucharistically trained that no act could receive its approbation unless it in some way contributed to the glory of Thy altar; so that any act which might estrange my soul from Thee would in an instant be dismissed. On the other hand, if any act helps me to serve Thee, Jesus, let me accept it, perform it, without delay."

The memory now importunes us for presentation

to the King. It recognizes its weakness; it feels that too many useless words and foolish doings impress themselves upon its surface, while matter that counts is allowed to vanish without profit to the soul. Moreover, the tempting features of sin seem to linger, while the attractions of virtue are quickly obliterated.

"I wish, dear Master, that You impart to my memory the quality of retaining everything capable of helping me to advance in the love of Thy Divine Majesty, and would take from me at the same time this dangerous facility I have of remembering facts detrimental to my soul!"

We pause in our reflections to cast one look upon the King enthroned on the altar. What quiet, stately magnificence characterizes His earthly abode! Nature and grace are combined to show honour to their Author and Maker. The altar throne is a bower of blossoms and lights whose soft effulgence radiate as if from Him above. The many candles slowly consuming themselves, are symbolic of souls wearing themselves out in the service of the Lord. These lights betoken the thirst of love in the hearts of the faithful who, while absent, appoint these flickering sentinels to stand guard in their place. The flowers exhaling the sweet breath of Nature, sing silent hymns to the perfection of their Creator. If we may not behold that countenance that was the delight of Galilee, we have here a hint at least, of its surpassing loveliness. It is as if those fragrant servants of the Most High reflected and refracted the glory of the Tabernacle Sun.

Around the altar are grouped the faithful; how few, alas, of all the disciples of Christ. They kneel and pray, while the rest of the world is plunged in amusements, or indulging the whims of the flesh. These are the loyal friends of the Master, who by their adoration give greater glory to God than all the famous leaders of science or art. These truly just souls, wrapt in fervent union with the hidden Victim of the altar, cause more pleasure to the heavenly court than whole battalions of heroes or heroines; for greatness, in the sight of the Most High, is measured by correspondence to grace, by generosity in the service of the Lord, and by littleness in one's own estimation. The spectacle of ardent adorers before the tabernacle is the acknowledgment which grace makes of the attractions of the sanctuary. O would that we could emulate the conduct of these loyal servants of the altar King! Would that our lives, like theirs, could tell of years of tabernacle service!

Our review is not as yet concluded; the five exterior senses await their turn for an introduction. "Master, let me offer in turn to Thee, each of my five senses. They are the corridors that lead to my mind and heart. Through them I have acquired what little knowledge I possess of Thee. Master, make each of service to Thee in Thy Tabernacle; let each spread Thy Eucharistic reign. Train my

eye so that it will detect everywhere Thy beauty; my ear to notice the faintest note that echoes from Thy altar throne; my tongue immediately to recognize the sweetness of the Bread of Angels; my nostrils to scent the slightest aroma that escapes from Thy garden enclosed; I beg Thee, Master, perfect my sense of touch, so that by its means everything I handle will, by a wonderful transmutation, become immediately changed into something pleasing to Thee. O Master, forgive my foolish wanderings; they are the consequence of a mind infatuated with a certain King known to Thee and to me. Behold, my senses are Thine-have I not lost them to Thee? And if they do not always advance my union with Thee, this failure comes from human weakness, not from my lack of good will.

"My tongue has spoken my thoughts, Master; let not my faculty of speech depart without an offering and a blessing. O King, I dedicate the tongue with all its powers, to Thy service. May it ever render pleasing homage to Thy Divine Majesty; may it labour to win souls to Thee, to extol Thy Eucharistic grandeurs, Thy sacramental benefits, Thy tabernacle joys. May every word, crystallized by love, lend lustre to Thy crown; may the combination of all its efforts swell into a Eucharistic harmony that will echo through my life and through my death, and plead in irresistible accents before my Eternal Judge.

"Master, the review is over. We have publicly

consecrated our every faculty and every sense to Thy Sacramental Self. May each and all of these faculties of knowledge and experience remain faithful to their pledge of today."

Raised aloft on His tabernacle throne, the King graciously smiles His approval and showers blessings upon us. When now the glorious strains of the Benediction hymns roll on their way to the throne, we plunge into their music and revel in their waves of love. We become immersed in a very ocean of love, and wish that every drop of water in the seas, every atom in the air, every grain of sand, every particle in creation, would represent a note in the hymn of love we would fain sing to Our King. While the incense ascends in clouds of fragrance to the throne, we pray that the good odour of virtue may rise in like manner from all our acts.

At last the solemn moment arrives when the King requites His loyal courtiers. O what a favour is ours! Nothing less than the personal blessing of the Monarch of Heaven and earth! What good wishes, what congratulations, what tokens of affection can be compared to the actual blessing of Jesus Christ? O let us kneel with minds all eager for light, with hearts all thirsty for grace, and with bodies bowed in reverence before the God Who blesses us. The moment comes. Silence is its best accompaniment. When the Creator blesses, creation folds its wings and adores. O do we not feel

the waters of grace as they descend from the Source of all that is good? How they flood our souls and cause them to rejoice in the gift of faith! Can any earthly favour be compared to this? Well might we join with the priest and exclaim: "Blessed be God! Blessed be His Holy Name!" "Praise the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, now and forever, for They have given proof of Their mercy, Their love, and Their goodness to us in this glorious Sacrament of the Altar." One last look before we depart from the throne room:

"Tabernacle King, we leave Thee to work for Thee, to suffer for Thee, and if necessary, to die for Thee. We are ready, by prayer and deed, to conquer souls for Thy altar kingdom. Thou hast proved Thy affection for us; now let us prove ours for Thee. To love, to work, to suffer, to die—all for Thee! Tabernacle King, Thou hast won all from us; our hearts are Thine!"

CHAPTER XIV

RECREATION

To PRAY while we play! Is it possible? Let us see. Recreation is a necessary consequence of our human nature. The human machine can stand a certain amount of toil without relaxation, but that is all. Unless the strain be taken off there will come a time when the machinery will break down. The overworked man will age before his time and will go through life soured and dull, while all the rest of the world is flooded in sunshine and happiness.

Legitimate recreation is most evidently the Will of God, as is seen from our own personal construction and from the heavenly directed rules of religious communities, where the hour for recreation is just as sacredly observed as the hour of prayer. When relaxation is kept within reasonable bounds, and not sought for inordinately, then it serves to help us throw ourselves with greater energy into our work, perform our tasks pleasantly and quickly, and even apply ourselves with greater recollection to prayer. The problem that we now have to solve is just how to spread an atmosphere of prayer over our recreation, without causing it to become too artificial; and, as this prayer is to keep us in close touch with the God of the Tabernacle, our purpose will be to make our recreation Eucharistic. Let us go to the tabernacle to beg a blessing upon our period of relaxation. God's benediction should accompany us in every act of our lives, and if one eighth or one quarter of our lives is to be spent in recreation, should we not seek the Creator's blessing?

So, "Master," we say, "we are about to enjoy ourselves. That it is congenial, we do not deny; but, Master, we know that nothing can be truly pleasant unless it be done according to Thy Will: so that is the primary reason why this hour is to be agreeable to us-because Thou dost will it. We thank Thee, Master, for having so intermixed pleasure in the less pleasant duties of life. Life is indeed serious, but sometimes we can suffer a lot, bear a lot, if we are but allowed to enjoy the solace of an hour of fun. We come then, O God of our hearts, to seek Thy blessing. We feel that unless Thou be with us, clouds will appear to mar the sunshine of our happiness. We know, from sad experience, that it is at recreation that we have often lost our peace of conscience, that we have seriously offended Thee, and in one short hour of relaxation lost all that it had taken a month to acquire. Bless us then, O Master, and watch over us, so that every moment of the coming hour be spent in union with Thy holy Will."

With the music of God's benediction ringing in our ears we begin our recreation. Our intention is to relax, to ease the brain, to loosen the contracted muscles, and in general to give legitimate

rein to our desire for a rest, sport, or pleasure. If we can make an act of love in a moment of prayer, why can we not, as Christians, season with love even a joke, a hearty laugh? It is just as easy to make others smile out of a desire to please God as it is to make them weep over their offences against God. Let us make a pact, then, with ourselves, that every smile, every laugh, every effort to amuse others, will represent so many acts of love to Jesus. When Our Lady beguiled her time in the happy home at Nazareth, we can be sure that all her smiles at the Baby Christ were beautiful as expressions of love. During recreation we have a great opportunity to prove the sincerity of our love of God. We profess, during serious prayer, that we love God; that for His sake we love our neighbour as ourselves. Now during recreation, where we come into contact with our fellow beings, it remains to be seen whether our love is as genuine as we pretended it to be. The thought that should animate us at this moment is that all our companions are the personal friends of Jesus. Here is an angel coming up to us with a letter of introduction: "This introduces you to my friend, Soand-So; any favour done him will be gratefully appreciated by Me-Signed, 'Jesus!'"

This is indeed no imagination. Our neighbours are the personal friends of the Master. To prove His love for them, He submitted to suffering, to death; to show that love, He came to them this

very morning in Holy Communion; for their sakes He stays at all hours in the tabernacle—He loves them all. If, then, we love Him, let us love those whom He loves; let us please Him by pleasing them; let us be as cordial, as thoughtful, as considerate in our attentions as we possibly can, and in this way we shall give magnificent proof of the genuineness of our love. Surely if Jesus takes delight in locking Himself in our neighbour's heart, we also can be pleased to spend a few moments in his company.

Charity is the Master's favourite virtue. "This is My commandment, that you love one another." It is during recreation that we are most often called upon to practise this virtue. Let us then try to see Christ in our neighbour. When we repress our indignation at any annoying acts, we do so out of a desire to please Christ, Whom we see reflected in our neighbour's soul. When we show a positive act of kindness, say a helpful word, lighten a cross, or bring unexpected pleasure—all these will be directed to the Christ Who considers anything done to our neighbour as done to Himself. "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of My least brethren you did it to Me." (Matt. xxv. 40.) Seeing in our companions at recreation the Host of our Communions, the Victim of our Masses, and the Friend of our visits, who can say that charity is hard to practise?

Let us consider, moreover, the effect our conduct

has upon non-Catholics. This person hears us profess belief in the Real Presence, envies perhaps our faith, would wish to be able to say that Christ was truly present. "Surely," the non-Catholic says, "if their doctrine be true, no good Catholic could be uncharitable. What! receive God in Communion and then make use of the same tongue that served as His throne, to insult, to criticize, and to belittle one's neighbours? No, the Catholic who frequently receives Holy Communion cannot be uncharitable."

Imagine, then, his dismay when he hears us indulging in remarks detrimental to our neighbour's character, when we make ourselves the vehicles of gossip and the channels of suspicions and false reports. We must not forget that the man in the street judges the truth of our religion and its dogmas by the way we conduct ourselves with our fellow beings. If we be kind, thoughtful, just, and good-natured, then he will admit that there is something, after all, in a living faith; otherwise, he will shrug his shoulders and dismiss the thought that Catholics really believe what they profess. To be charitable, then, is an argument for the Real Presence; it proves to the outsider that we are conscious of our dignity as custodians of the Eucharist and children of God; it shows them that the secret of our happiness is contained in the Blessed Eucharist.

It is a mistake to be always sad. True, the shadows of life are at times depressing, but there are silver gleams in every cloud. We could indeed mourn at all moments over the outrages perpetuated against our tabernacle King, but then, others not understanding our sorrow, would accuse us of hypocrisy or at least say that we were "misfits," brooding over imaginary wrongs and refusing to extract the honey from the flowers of life. No! God hardly intends us to be always meditating on the darkness. There are plenty of reasons for us to rejoice, to be glad, to shout, out of sheer happiness. As we play and romp and amuse ourselves generally, let us be glad in the thought of our Eucharistic riches, of the happy Communion of today, of the still happier one of the morrow.

"Why are you so glad when you have so many crosses to cast shadows over your life?

"Who could be sad in the midst of so much happiness? I am loved by a great Friend. He is my Father! my best and dearest Comrade. He waits for me at all hours; never tires of my tale of woe; comes to my house; lives in me. I sad?—No, my heaviest cross is light, for the God of the Cross helps me to bear it."

We can give full vent to our joy at recreation; it will serve as an outlet to our effervescent spirits; it will be a means of expressing exteriorly the happiness that fills our soul over the thought of our colossal riches. We are rich beyond all counting in the wealth of the altar; emperors of power in the authority the God of the tabernacle kingdom gives us to place Him at our disposal, monarchs of

all we survey. As far as the eye can see in the tabernacle kingdom, all belongs to us. We of the faith are the favourite children of God, brought to His table when young, fed with His own Food, admitted to His company, privileged with the favour of seeing Him renew daily His sacrifice for us.

Is not all this sufficient to make us give expression to our joy?

When our recreations are out of doors and we can drink in the fresh air, we can think of the good all this does to the organs of our body, and remember that the air of the altar should in like manner inebriate our soul, so that, after each draught of Eucharistic air, we may be stronger in God's service. How is it that our souls do not show the effect of all our Communions, our Masses, and our visits? Our bodies, by their healthy bloom and vigour, testify to the good qualities of the air, yet we are saturated with Eucharistic atmosphere and in spite of it all we are weak, languid, puny Christians, ashamed of our faith, a burden to the Community. and a plague to ourselves. The explanation of this strange state of affairs may be found in the lack of our correspondence to the many graces of the Blessed Sacrament. Our body responds to the beneficent effects of good air; our soul, because of our perverseness, very often suffers. We refuse to be generous in God's service; we deny Him our coöperation; and the Eucharistic grace, that could have done so much for us, is lost. As we inhale the fresh air, let us think over this contrast and promise God to look after our soul in the way that we look after our body. When we feel that life in the open is improving our health, let us thank the God of the tabernacle for having been so good to us. While we are happy in the open, many are suffering on beds in dark, dingy tenements; others toil in obscure mines; others, still, droop amid tropical heat or freeze in the icy wastes of the North.

"Jesus, it is good for us to be in Thy delightful atmosphere. We feel the benefit of Thy creation. Master, we would like to exchange this hour of recreation for one before the tabernacle; but then, O Master, if through lack of air and exercise we succomb to disease and thus be forced on a bed of sickness to forego the pleasures of the tabernacle, then, Master, it is better for us at this moment to be out in the open, in order that we may live healthy lives—all with a view to adoring Thee better at the altar."

Sometimes we go off on a walk. As we pass along we can reflect that all roads, in the intention of God, should lead to the tabernacle. God created us to know, love, and serve Him here on earth, in order that we might see Him afterwards in Heaven. Now, on earth, He dwells in the Eucharist where He is to be known, loved, and served by men. All human industry should be subservient, then, to the worship of the Eucharist; whence it follows that

the highways and byways should all lead directly or indirectly to the tabernacle. As we meander along, we can reflect how little men seem to grasp the true purpose of their existence. Many have hearts harder than the pavement over which they tread. Their eyes are shut to the beauty of the Eucharist, and their ears deafened to the appeals made by the God of the altar. Perhaps we can do something to bring about the social reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Eucharist. Let us promise God, out of sheer gratitude, that we will do our best to make others see the divine plan in the Blessed Sacrament, so that if we be saved by the Eucharist, we shall, in turn, give life to others who will thus add to our everlasting happiness in Heaven.

We must not forget to send occasional messages to Jesus during our recreation. Quietly to breathe a short prayer will not spoil our amusement; on the contrary, it will add to our interior joy, so that body and soul will recreate together. Such little unseen flowers of love send a sweet fragrance to the throne of God, and cause Him to bestow upon us the smile of His approbation even as once He looked down upon His only-begotten One and said: "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." Thus, now and then, we glance in the direction of the tabernacle; "Having a good time, Master, but still thinking of Thee."

Our recreation comes to an end. God be praised!

We have refreshed body and mind without losing sight of Him. Now before the altar throne we beg our Saviour to pardon our faults, to make up for our omissions, and to present our little good acts to His Father:

"Were You lonely, Saviour, when I was away? Still, Master, I went at Thy bidding. Here I am to do Thy Will. Offer all that was good in my deeds to Thy Heavenly Father. Ask Him to pardon my offenses, to supply Your perfection for my omissions. I am ready now for work—all to please Thee, loving God of my heart. Speak, for Thy servant heareth. 'Praised be the most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament for all His manifold kindness to us!' Amen."

CHAPTER XV

A MEDITATION—CHARITY

Let us select for our meditation a virtue, the queen of them all—Charity. Charity is defined as a divine virtue by which we love God above all things for Himself and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of God. Studied from the sanctuary standpoint "Charity is a tabernacle virtue, by which we love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament above all things for His own sake and our neighbour as ourselves for the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."

1. CHARITY IS A TABERNACLE VIRTUE!

Let us not overlook this salient feature in our Divine Lord. He is God in the Eucharist as He was God on earth, as He is God gloriously reigning in Heaven. All His acts on earth were attributed to the One Personality, Jesus Christ; so now all the graces that emanate from the tabernacle can be attributed to the same Jesus Christ present with us in the Eucharist. Now as then they are the acts of the Man-God. We are perfectly truthful in saying that Charity is a tabernacle virtue; and as the Eucharist was left to guide us through life, so also the Charity seen in the Eucharist is the type upon which we should model our own Charity, if we wish to arrive safe at our promised land, the Kingdom

of Heaven. How, then, is Charity a tabernacle virtue? We might just as well ask, "How is the Eucharist the Eucharist?" for, as the definition of God is "Charity," so also the most perfect verbal equivalent of the Eucharist is likewise "Charity." St. John showed this feature of the Divine Sacrament when he preluded his account of Its institution by the words: "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end"; and the means Christ immediately took to give proof of His love, was His bequest to us of the wonderful Sacrament of the Altar.

Out of love for us orphans, Christ devised the Eucharist by which we could safely pass through the tempests here below, and finally arrive at the port of our heavenly Father. By the Eucharist, Christ could reap the benefits of His resurrection and still let us enjoy the innumerable privileges of His Presence. Love, and love only, is the explanation of all these truths. It must be indeed a tremendous love that could think out such devices, could so easily link Heaven and earth, join the past with the present, and promise an infinite blissful future. The Blessed Sacrament meant a full demand upon the entire resources of Divine Wisdom, Power, and Wealth; yet God was equal to the emergency, and today the Masterpiece of Infinite Ingenuity is ours—real, lasting, our dearest treasure. The institution of the Eucharist meant the acceptance of all the sorrow, fear, and torture of the Passion. It entailed the penalty of ages of indifference, coldness, and diabolical insult; yet God did not hesitate. He loved His own and He loved them to the end. In spite of all the powers of hell, He determined to leave a proof of His affection that would stand any shock and be an eternal monument to the love God had for His creatures. Truly, then, we may say that Charity is epitomized by the Eucharist.

2. Charity is a Tabernacle Virtue by which we Love!

Let us linger for a moment on this word "love." What is love? Love is an inclination towards something; it is a movement of the will by which we take pleasure in the object presented to us, desire to become united to it and to live always with it. Love makes us equal with the person loved, leads us to share all that we have with him, and is the motive for everything we do. Just as the eye is for sight, the ear for hearing, so the heart is fashioned for love; to fill itself with affection for somebody. If, then, we are called upon to love the Blessed Sacrament, we should be irresistibly drawn to take our greatest pleasure in It, to live only to be united to It. If our love of the Blessed Sacrament be worthy of the name, we ought to treat Christ in the tabernacle as our Friend, make Him participant in all we call our own, and do everything out of affection for Him.

3. By which we Love Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!

"O God of Infinite Wisdom, Thou art great in all Thy works, but in none more than in this Sacrament-where Thou hast created a work which is identified with Thyself-than which none can be greater." With a thrill of joy we see how easy it is to fulfill, by means of the Eucharist, the first and greatest command of the Almighty: - "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." Jesus is God. Jesus in the Eucharist is still God. It is easy to become enraptured with the Eucharist: No wonder, then, if our heart cannot contain itself for joy. Love, to be consonant with our nature, requires a sensible object. It is all very well to speak of affection for Heavenly beings, but such desires are dulled in us by bodies of clay, limited by the senses, and beset by passions that ever draw us to the earth. No, human love demands a sensible object. This object is found, without any doubt, in the Eucharist; for there, in crystallized form, we have all that is worshipful in the Godhead, all that is appealing in the humanity of Christ, all that we need to satisfy our heart's desire. Our whole being is drawn to the Eucharist by means suited to our human nature. Our eyes detect the treasures that lie hidden in the deep mine of the Scriptures, by which we can sense the reality of the Blessed Sacrament. What marvels are found in the Old and the New Testament! But the House of God is itself

a Scripture. We lift our eyes with delight to the lines and curves that beautify this material temple of the Lord. We glance about and behold the faithful gathering to adore, happy in the reverence they pay to the God of the Eucharist. It matters not where He is; whether He be in the spacious cathedral or in the humble country church; our eyes can see from the peace and happiness of the adorers the fact that the Blessed Sacrament is no figment of the imagination, but a Divine reality. We love better what we can see and admire; so when we see the Host, the centre of the Church's joy, we can concentrate our powers of loving upon that crystallization of God before us, and give full play to a creature's affection for his loving Maker.

As it was with the eyes, so it is with the other senses. To the ear comes the echoes of the Master's message: "This is My Body." Sight, touch, smell may be deceived, but the ear of faith still thrills with the memorable words spoken by the Saviour on the eve of His death. The sense of taste is specially honoured by the sweet Presence of the Master, for He reposes for a moment on the tongue before He descends into our heart. Thus, the testimony of the senses teaches that in the Blessed Sacrament there is an object of love that is real and perfectly adapted to our human nature. Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for giving us the Eucharist! We are bound to love God. Love is easier where there is a sensible object. The Eu-

charist combines all these advantages. Praise be to the love that invented this magnet of Love!

We must love God above all things. Scripture shows us how God would have us practice Charity. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength." (Deut. vi. 5.) In all the other virtues there is a golden mean, equal distance between two sinful extremes. In those virtues it is almost as much an offense to God to exceed, as to be found wanting. Not so, however, in Charity. The limit, that is, the more we love, the more perfect is our Charity. This is why the Divine Wisdom would have us train the powers of our soul and body to their fullest capabilities, in the quest for the love of God.

Applied to the Eucharist, this doctrine leads us to use the utmost endeavours of the intelligence to unearth all the hidden riches of the Eucharistic mine. We call upon our heart and soul to satiate themselves with the Blessed Sacrament and to become inebriated with the Eucharist. We would use every talent we possess, every faculty of soul and body, and exert all these to their utmost to obtain the desired conquest. In no other way can we hope to obey the injunction of the Almighty to love Him with all our strength. Such a resolution as this will give a Eucharistic turn to all we do. If we study, it will be to learn something that will enrich our mind with knowledge serviceable for Eucharistic

worship; if we labour for souls, it will be to direct them to the altar throne of the Most High; if we suffer or pray, these acts will be directed to the same great good; in short, once the general resolution will have been taken, everything we think, say, or do; everything we possess or hope to possess, will be directed to the main ambition of our life, to love Jesus and to make Him loved in the Sacrament of His Love.

4. LOVE GOD FOR HIS OWN SAKE!

Theologians distinguish two kinds of love, or rather two reasons for love; the love of God for Himself and the love of God for the sake of the good He can do us. It goes without saying that the first kind of love, or the love of benevolence, as it is called, is the more perfect form of love. To love God for what He is in Himself, on account of His perfection, His sanctity, His power, because He is truly worthy of being loved, is indeed the first motive that should direct our affection towards Him.

The other form of love, to love God because He is good to us, is not to be condemned. In fact, it is the basis of the purer form of love, and, indeed, we could not truly love God for Himself except we thought in some way that God would be good to us or reward us for so doing. Still, in itself the first form of love is higher, purer, and more perfect. In our love, then, of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, we should learn, while giving all due

respect to grateful love, consequent upon the many benefits we may hope to receive from honouring Our Eucharistic Lord—we should learn to love Jesus for His own sake, because He, in the Tabernacle, is worthy of all our adoration, thanksgiving, and love, even though we might never be rewarded for so doing. This is the reason why that ejaculation; "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament" is so good; because it is a perfect act of the highest form of love. We desire the centre of Christ's love; namely, His Divine Heart, to be praised in His dearest and greatest Masterpiece, the Blessed Eucharist; and that without asking for any recompense for ourselves.

5. And our Neighbour as Ourselves for the Love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!

The material object of Charity is triple—God, our neighbour, and ourselves. The formal object of Charity is one; namely, God. This is what distinguishes Christian love from carnal love. It arises from the highest and purest motives and far from shadowing the possessor with sin, makes him capable of priceless deeds of merit.

We must love our neighbour as ourselves; so let us see what love God would want us to have for ourselves. Well-ordered love of self seeks first to fulfil the plan of God in the creation of self, and this is to effect one's own salvation; therefore, all of us are bound before God to make use of those means whereby our salvation is to be obtained, and to avoid everything that would prove an obstacle to our salvation. To save our souls we must make use of certain means, and these in the Eucharistic plan of God are found principally in the Eucharistic life-Mass, Communion, and the Blessed Sacrament; whence true love of self would have us seek to obtain sufficient Eucharistic nourishment. It would be a mistake, under plea of Charity to our neighbour, to starve ourselves of Mass, Communion, or visits, unless our neighbour was in great corporal or spiritual need; for we cannot do spiritual work unless sustained by spiritual means; so, as God intended the Eucharist to be our food in Communion, our means of reparation and adoration at Mass, and our consolation and strength during visits, the more use we make of the Eucharist, the better work can we do for our neighbour.

6. Love of Our Neighbour!

We are told to love our neighbour for the sake of God. Naturally speaking, there is oftentimes very little in our neighbour to attract us to love. Disagreeable qualities, physical defects, moral blemishes, uncongenial personality—all these build up a wall of separation between us and him. Supernaturally speaking, this wall should at once be torn down, for we are bidden to love our neighbour, not so much for his own sake, but for the sake of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. What a motive

—to please Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! Because He loves our neighbour just as much and perhaps even more than He loves us; because He suffered and died for our neighbour; because He promises that He will regard everything we do to our neighbour as done to His own Eucharistic Self; are not all these reasons weighty enough to persuade us to love our neighbour?

With the Eucharist as Peacemaker, Interpreter, and Advocate, the love of our neighbour becomes delightful and easy. In the heart of our neighbour we can see reflected the image of the tabernacle Host, urging us to forget disagreeable idiosyncracies and love the neighbour for Christ's sweet sake. Between us and the Eucharist stands the neighbour. If we wish to prove that our love of the Blessed Sacrament is genuine, let us prove it by deeds, or otherwise God may doubt the sincerity of our love. Thus St. John says: "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother; he is a liar." (I John iv. 20.) And we may conclude with the same apostle, Eucharistically: "This commandment we have from Jesus—that he who loveth Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament love also his brother."

At Communion time we cannot but feel kindly disposed towards our fellow banqueters, or those who should be our fellow banqueters. The atmosphere of the tabernacle is one of peace, of cordiality, of sweet forgetfulness of self in the interest of others. Graces come and go from the storehouse

of Charity, the Altar, warming us towards our fellow beings, and inducing us to do a little more than we are strictly obliged to do, to make life pleasant for them. When we fall, as human nature is apt to, we can confess our sin to the Master: "Master, I failed in Thy favourite virtue; it but shows how imperfect, how human I still am. I considered myself good, able to do a lot for Thy sake. Alas! such illusions were soon dispelled. It needed but one word, less than a word, a suspicion of an unkind smile, and forthwith along came the scowl, up went the nose, and out went that cutting remark. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, forgive me for being so imperfect. I offer to the Eternal Father Thy unblemished Charity in reparation for my selfishness, and I beg Thee, by Thy Divine Charity, to give me a little of Thine."

Kneeling before the tabernacle at the end of our meditation, let us thank the God of the Eucharist for the light He has given us on His favourite virtue; let us resolve to love Him Who did so much out of love for us, and for His sake we will promise to wear the tabernacle insignia of "The Divine Virtue of Charity."

CHAPTER XVI

THE VESPER AUDIENCE

THE shadows of evening falling over the land gently remind us of the necessity of closing our day with a visit to Him by Whom all things were made. There is a fascination about an evening visit to the Blessed Sacrament that cannot be surpassed. At this time, all nature is stilling itself in sleep; the birds have ceased their song; the flowers are asleep for the night, and darkness descends over the earth. It is then that the sanctuary draws us like a spell. The beams of the little ruby light vivaciously beckon us to come and speak to the Master. We come and we kneel. There in the darkness, graces seem to flow from the tabernacle to the silent worshippers. The very atmosphere is permeated with devotion. We enter into the charm of the place and the hour and adore Our God. Our thoughts go back over the day. From the first conscious impression to this last act of the night, they all reappear, laden with merit or demerit, as the case may be. We take each act and present it to the King. "Today, Master, I began for Thee, but alas! poor human nature again proved its weakness. Thou knowest better than I the sad story of today's happenings. Thou must have followed with sorrowing Heart my lukewarmness, my distaste for mortification, my lack of generosity. O

Master, pardon me for all this weakness! If I had only confided more in Thee, things might have turned out differently; but no! I wanted to do the whole affair by myself and I fell a victim to my own conceit. Tomorrow, Master, I shall begin the day with more humility, with greater distrust of self, with more confidence in Thee, and together we shall fight anew the battle of life.

"Were you pleased, Master, with some of today's work? I did try at times to merit Thy approbation. True, there was a lot of self in my actions, there was a lot of vanity, but these are inseparable from all I do. However, sometimes at least, I endeavoured to please Thee. Art Thou satisfied, my King and my All? Tell me! Bless my labour if well done; bless it if poorly done; for then I am in greater need of Thy blessing.

"Master! A favour please! Take all of my deeds of today into the furnace of Thy Heart, there to be purified and refined before they are offered to Thy Eternal Father. O Lord of all, supply for my deficiency! I realize that I should have done better. How many graces I lost! How many priceless opportunities slipped through my hands! Thou didst knock in vain at the door of my heart; no answer greeted Thy kind invitation. I was lost in the world, seeking after the vain trinkets of time, instead of collecting the jewels of eternity. Forgive me, Master, for my omissions. Thou art all rich in spiritual treasures. Offer of Thy fullness in

place of my poverty, Thy perfection for my wretchedness, Thy merits for my misery.

"Jesus, I thank Thee for all the favours of today. They were as numerous as the pulsations of my heart. Strewn like roses over my path, these graces made my day fresh and fragrant, consoled my dreary hours, and enlivened many tasks. through this day, Master, Thou didst follow me with Thy blessing, and now before retiring I come to testify my gratitude. Thank you, Master, for that happy Communion. It was well worth a whole day of trials and sorrows. In that close embrace with Thee I gathered sufficient strength to face the coming battle. Nestling close to Thy Sacred Heart one gains courage to take up the cross. I shall try to tell Thee of my gratitude in the Communion of tomorrow. Thanks, again, dear Master, for the flood of grace that rushed down from the breaking of Thy Heart at the Mystic Sacrifice. It seemed as if I was once more on Calvary, and that with Mary and John I stood beneath Thy Cross, a human chalice that received the precious streams of Blood flowing from Thy open Side. This Blood cleansed my soul, invigorated me, purified me from evil intentions, and bore me along on its saving current to the happy meeting with Thee in the heaven of Thy Sanctity.

"Gratitude also, O King, for the sweetness of those visits to the Blessed Sacrament; they made my burdens light; they silvered the clouds that hovered over my path; they rarified the atmosphere; and, they made my life worth living. Thou alone, dear Master, dost know all the consolation that is stored up in Thee, like honey in the flowers. True, Thou containest in Thyself all sweetness, and those who, like bees, take the trouble to extract it, must return again and again to the Eucharist. How blissful it was to refresh my soul during the long-drawn-out hours by an occasional sip of Thy delicious sweetness, secreted in the cool recesses of the sanctuary. Out in the world all was noisy, dusty, and tiresome. Here, on the contrary, was religious silence, soul-refreshing fragrance, and blessed peace, without a shadow of reproach. Master, I thank Thee for all these tokens of Thy love!

"Unfortunately, Saviour, I feel guilty this evening. I come before Thee as a culprit; I have fallen; I have offended Thee; I admit my guilt. I was tempted to stay away, yet I came, confident of obtaining forgiveness. All through the day I stole Thy glory; I robbed Thee of Thy just tribute. Yes, Master, I am a thief; but now as the day is all but spent, with sorrow in my heart I pitifully ask Thee to remember me, for Thou art in Thy Kingdom." We repeat our request. We invite Our Lady to intercede for us. She knows the sad doings of today. She followed our actions with a grieving heart, and perhaps wept over our ingratitude; but as she is our mother, she will plead for us, and

soon in the language of love that needs no words, Jesus will say: "This day, even now, thou art with Me in My Paradise, in the Eucharistic Kingdom." Oh! what breezes sweep over our souls as we feel ourselves forgiven by the Lord! It is so good to be near Him, to know that we are reconciled to Him, that He is our Friend. All this is indeed a paradise, little known to the world, little merited by us, but revealing the love of the Heart of Christ, and forming a most fitting close for a day of love.

Here in the evening visit, we may formulate plans for the Eucharistic conquest of souls. Gazing quietly through the perspective of time, we may conceive new ideas, new methods we may employ to make the Master better known and better loved. How can we ourselves improve our worship of Him? Is there nothing the matter with our Communions, our assistance at Mass, our conduct during our visits? "Then, Master, could we not do a little more to make others know and love Thee?" How about this suggestion? How about that? "Are these plans acceptable to Thee, Master? Fountain of Prudence, enlighten me, so that my actions may not be detrimental to the cause of religion, but may rather contribute to Thy greater glory in the Sacrament of Thy Love. So much could be done if we only bestirred ourselves in the proper way. Others have accomplished wonders in the past. Why could not their good deeds be

reproduced in the future? With You, Master, we can do all things; this is my suggestion—a blessing on it, O King!"

The stillness of the chapel, broken only by the subdued murmur of prayer, is in marked contrast to the clamour of the street. There countless attractions challenge the claims of the sanctuary, and there numerous souls are drawn into the whirlpool of temptation and sin. "O foolish world that neglects the true Source of happiness, vainly seeking the essence of life in fleeting amusements that carry one away from God! Oh! if you only knew the happy, delicious moments that can be spent around the sanctuary! If thou didst know the gift of God! Alas! how much anguish is caused to the Sacred Heart by thee, O insensate world! Thou dost cause souls to hunger and starve even on the very threshold of life." Let us breathe a prayer to the God of the altar that He may enliven this foolish, unhappy world.

"Master, they tell me that one day Thou art to be my Judge. Here, tonight, Thou art all kindness, clemency, and love. Thou dost not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. Now I can approach Thee fearing nothing but the excess of Thy love; but one day Thy love is to give place to dread majesty. Then, surrounded by all pomp and glory, Thou shall pass irrevocable judgment on my soul. Then strictest justice shall attend Thy

acts. If I am weighed in the balance and found wanting, nothing in Heaven or earth will save me from my awful fate. O humble God of the altar, before it is too late, protect me, defend me, so that I may now begin to live in such a way as to merit Thy approbation on the last day. Master, let me make a pact with Thee; if I do all in my power to spread Thy Eucharistic reign, wilt Thou conduct me sweetly and strongly to Thy right side on the day of reckoning? Forgive me, O King, if this policy savour of selfishness; but it is Thou Thyself that implanted the desire for salvation so deeply in my heart; and if to save my soul it is necessary that I should become an apostle of the Blessed Sacrament, Master, Thou alone art responsible for my boldness.

"Heaven is far off, Master! It seems a long time to await death; but then, what means all this happiness inseparable from Thy Eucharistic courts? Tell me a secret, O King:—is it not true that Thou didst wish to transform the darkness of exile into the brightness of home by means of the Blessed Sacrament? Art not Thou here the object of our happiness, even as Thou art of the angels and saints above? True, there Thou art unveiled; Thou art seen in all Thy glory, face to face; but here it is Thou just the same. We have Thee; we enjoy Thee. Is this not Heaven on earth? O Master, a million thanks for this prelude to Eternal Happi-

ness! O God, if Heaven on earth is so happy, what will not be the happiness of beholding Thee face to face, and that forever and ever?"

Before we bid farewell let us pray for all our friends. "Bless them, Master, even as Thou hast blessed us. Fill their hearts to overflowing with Thy gifts. Convert such and such a sinner, stumbling through life with his load of iniquity. Call him back to the ocean of Thy mercy, where all his scarlet offences will be washed as pure as the snow. A plea for others that I know. They are trying to come to Thee through the darkness of heresy. They, without fault of their own, have never known the Blessed Sacrament. If they had known Thee they would be gladly adoring Thee. Send them Thy light and conduct them to Thy altar.

"A blessing, Master, upon Thy priests. They are Thy ambassadors, the heralds who announce Thy glories and Thy claims to the world. They need Thy grace, for without it their words are sterile, their deeds unproductive. Bless their efforts, Master, preserve them from the attacks of the enemy; follow them with Thy efficacious grace, so that their mission be not spent in vain.

"Master, I am sorry, but the time is come for me to go. The signal for my departure is already quivering in the air. Ah, here is another proof that perfect happiness is not obtainable on earth. We no sooner begin to possess Thee than we are forced to say good-by! We are lifted to the seventh heaven by the sweetness of Thy love, and are suddenly sent back to earth with a jolt. I should like to pass the night with Thee, but that is impossible. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. O happy angels that guard the sanctuary! You are privileged to ever remain near the altar. Do me a favour! Watch for me this night before the throne. Tell the Master at every minute during the night of my desire to love Him. Beg Him to send me His blessing, so that on the morrow I may begin to work once more for Him. O little ruby light, how you are to be envied! Nothing to do but consume thyself all through the silent watches of the night before the Author of all! O little Sanctuary Star, burn for me! Be symbolic of my heart, ceaselessly beating out of love for our God. Let thy flickerings this night tell the tale of my affection; let them whisper the message of my heart.

"And now, Master, good-night! I must say goodby! I have been happy with Thee all day, but really I must leave Thee now. O may the Adorable Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament be known, loved, and adored in all the Tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time! May every star in Heaven, every sigh of the wind, every pulsation of every heart, every drop of the rolling waters, unite in taking up the hymn of praise, and adore, bless, and thank Thee for having instituted the Blessed Sacrament.

"Pardon, O Loving Christ, all the sins that shall

be committed against Thee this night. Let Thy Precious Blood prevent at least one crime from being perpetrated. Forgive all the indifference, coldness, and ingratitude that will be shown Thy Eucharistic Self. Forgive such crimes, Master, for the world knows not what it does!

"A last blessing, Jesus, before I leave. Bless my soul with all its faculties; bless my body with all its organs; prepare me for the night; save me from temptation; send Thy angels to protect me. O Master, it is hard to go; it is good to be here! I could stay here all night. 'Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!' Would that every atom in space could repeat this prayer to the four corners of the universe!

"Thy Will be done, Master! I must leave Thee! Good-night, Jesus, good-night and good-by! I shall see Thee in the morning. I go to sleep, that I may work better for Thee. Good-night, Jesus!"

CHAPTER XVII

SLEEP

I T IS not to be supposed that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament automatically ceases with our last visit to the tabernacle—not at all. While there still remains a conscious glimmer in our minds. we may make use of it to honour the God of all creation, dwelling in our midst. We bade farewell to Our Saviour, but that was only as far as bodily separation was concerned. There still remains a period of wakefulness during which many loving thoughts may put the finishing touches to our Eucharistic Day. Sleep is a mysterious phase of our existence. Bordering, as it does, on the spiritual, sleep is still replete with every sign of animalism. God cannot sleep, for God is spiritual. Angels do not sleep, as they enjoy a nature akin to that of God. The brute beast sleeps as the necessary consequence of a corporal frame, subject to fatigue, worn out by exertion, and soon exhausted by hard labour. Despite the marvellous gifts that justly elevate man to the mastery of creation, he has, nevertheless, to make an open confession of his kinship with the brute beast, by succumbing to the imperious demands of sleep. Notwithstanding this prevalence of animalism in sleep, it still contains a strong suggestion of the spiritual; for sleep is an image of death, the forerunner of eternity.

In perfect sleep we lose control of intelligence

and will. The faculties which raise man high above the clouded senses of the animal kingdom are temporarily stilled. This happens in a more definite manner in death, where mind and will bid farewell to their habitation of clay and betake themselves to the domains of eternity. And even as the moments before death are precious and fraught with far-reaching consequences, so also are the moments before sleep. Let us now, in accordance with the spirit of our Eucharistic Day, sanctify its closing moments.

"Master," we may say, as we go our way to the bedroom, "a few moments ago, when I was before Thee at the altar, I could have imagined myself already in Heaven, drinking in the delights of Thy Presence, but also, my weary body, reminded me that I had to sleep. O Saviour, I tremble in Thy sight. Grant that I may never exalt myself in Thy presence by demanding the rights of angels, when I should be satisfied with the treatment allotted to the children of men. Let me never forget to appear before Thee save in the garments of a creature, a slave, a beggar, totally depending on Thee for life, for food—in fact, for everything that makes possible existence here below. If I am privileged to adore Thee in the Blessed Sacrament on earth, it is by reason of Thine infinite condescension. My only claim to this angelic favour is Thy love. I ask pardon if during the day I seemed to demand the Eucharistic favours as rights. Teach me to regard them in their true light, that of unmerited blessings and astonishing privileges."

We divest ourselves of our apparel. God protect us from ever separating ourselves from the grace of Eucharistic devotion, as others have done by their own folly. At one time, years ago, we might have known friends who were conspicuous for their piety to the Blessed Sacrament, and today those very same persons give disedification by their irreverence. What is to prevent us from lapsing into their state? God protect us from this evil! It would be worse than death, for in death we would be spared the crime of offending God; whereas indifference to the Blessed Sacrament would make our life almost a ceaseless taunt and insult to the Master.

As the process of preparation for sleep still continues, we wonder whether during the day we made any sensible increase in the love of God. What must not have been the satisfaction that filled Our Lady's mind as she viewed each day's work! Each day meant for her one sweet revolution of the wheels of love, each revolution recording an increase of affection, until the last act before death represented the acme of created love. Did we do much this day to make advance in the favourite virtue of the Master? If we were to analyze our acts, what percentage of love should we find? Was

it higher than yesterday's? Is this better than the affection of ten years ago?

"Master, pardon me for having been so ungrateful to Thee today; with Thy Sacrament so close at hand, it should have been so easy to work out of love, and out of great love for Thee; but now I am about to retire, a guilty servant, an unprofitable slave, instead of a loyal, useful friend and apostle."

Our last act before retiring should be similar to the one that marked the beginning of the day; namely, a genuflection in the direction of the Tabernacle King. Once in bed, our eyes and thoughts ascend to the starry regions overhead. Nature excels in the sky. The heavens repay examination, at all times, but none more so than at night. Then the scene of attraction is transferred from forest, dale, and valley below, to the heavens above. Myriads of stars, set off here and there by a brilliant planet, illumine the dark expanse and cast pale lights on the earth below, while the moon, serenely traveling on her way, spreads a peaceful light on sea and land. We can think of another region illumined by God's own lamps. With a slight variation of the words of the poet we may say: "Silently one by one in the Eucharistic meadows of earth, blossom the sanctuary lamps, the forget-me-nots of Jesus." If we could but pass swiftly over the earth by night, we might distinguish these reminiscent lights signalling Love. Some shine through the tracery of gorgeous cathedral windows; others throw a radiance from tiny convent chapels; others again glow from humble country churches, all telling of the Good Shepherd keeping the night watches over His flock. How we should like to spend our night passing from tabernacle to tabernacle, adoring the Victim of Love, and repairing by our fervour the indifference of men!

What a humiliation for God to be closed up in the deserted church through the long, lone hours of the night! God is always God, demanding always our profoundest reverence and lowliest homage; yet on earth, during at least one half of every twenty-four hours, He is deprived of the worship due to His Divinity. True, the sanctuary angels adore Him, but Jesus came for us and not for them. It is consoling to think of the heroic virtue of the Societies of the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament and other orders which give themselves up to perpetual adoration. These adore the Hidden King at hours when millions of their fellow men are plunged in sleep or immersed in a sea of wickedness. Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus for inspiring such generous souls! Still more may He be praised for His own generosity to us in instituting this Sacrament, knowing full well that our poor human nature would be forced at times to leave Him without worshippers. Still He is pleased to live with us, in the hope that our conscious moments at least may be sweetened by contact with Him.

Prior to His institution of this Sacrament, Christ saw full well the trials to which He would be subjected; but in spite of this, out of love for us He consented to remain on earth, in order to be our Victim, our Food, and our Friend. Oh, if we could only adore Him as He should be adored! Oh, that we had a million hearts to love Him worthily, a million tongues to praise Him justly! Would that every atom of this universe were divided into a trillion parts, and that every one of these parts might represent our hearts adoring, praising, thanking, and loving Jesus in the Sacrament of the Altar! Would that we could assist at all the Masses that are being celebrated in the other parts of the world, while the dark night throws its shadow around our own part of the globe. "Angel of God! my guardian, speed thee away to all those distant altars, catch the drops of Sacred Blood as they fall from the side of the dying Christ, and present their precious treasure in reparation for the sins of men. in thanksgiving for the Eucharist; and offer them as a prayer that Christ from His altar throne may rule over all."

At this moment a moonbeam glimmers through the window and sheds its pale light about the room. How it transforms the dark night, changing the blackness into silver by the power of light! That white, clear disc is strangely like the Host. O ris-

ing Host that floods the earth with light, would that all Catholics might see the true light of the Eucharistic Host, serene above the shadows of earth. Alas! the clouds of ignorance or doubt obscure the truth from many souls, just as on stormy nights the mists and vapors darken and veil the lunar light. If only a clean wind of Heaven would dispel that mist of ignorance, then the light of the Host would shine forth in its true splendour and guide those souls to Heaven. Can we remove the clouds of ignorance from the eyes of non-Catholics? Do we not know the arguments whereby the Real Presence can be seen as unmistakably as the moon on a clear night? Do we, by our lives, present the practical argument of good example whereby we attest that we believe that Christ is still a dweller on the earth?

As we drift into slumber, there comes a thought of envy of the angels who, unhampered by the imperfections of a material body, ceaselessly adore Our Lord, while we, inferior creatures, must yield to our human nature. "Guardian Angel, do not chide me for envious musings. Take my heart to Jesus and lay it on the altar, begging God to fill it with love; so that on awakening tomorrow, I may be ready to begin my day, chanting the hymn of love. Angel, stop a moment! Before you depart, let me prepare a present for the King. Wait until I gather some flowers for a bouquet." With this we cull from the garden of the soul some twenty

or thirty aspirations, selecting by preference the prayer, "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!" Then we bind those spiritual flowers into a bouquet and give them to the attending angel. "Guardian of my soul, take these quickly to the tabernacle. Tell Jesus I am sorry I cannot come myself, but that still awake I want Him to know that He is not as yet forgotten or unloved!"

Sleep, we said, is an image of death. In a few short moments we shall have lost our conscious thoughts, our power to perform a meritorious act. True, this loss will be only of a night's duration, but a time will come when we shall sleep a sleep that will know no earthly awakening, and that will be laden with important consequences. This night's sleep may be one of a series that will follow in unending line for the next twenty years, or it may be the introduction to the final repose. God alone knows whether we shall see the light of another day, but in any case it will do us no harm to fancy that this night may usher our souls into eternity. As we lie awake then, we wonder if we shall be in the state of grace when the summons comes. "O Crucified Dweller of the tabernacle, help me to save my soul! It is too horrible to think that after all those years of probation, all those Masses, Communions, and visits, I shall have to be condemned to perpetual absence from Thee. O Master, grant that the day just spent will be the forerunner of

my last day on earth, every moment of which may be spent as was today, in union with Thee in the Blessed Sacrament! Saviour, if I cling to Thee in the Eucharist as my only hope, wilt Thou give me the gift of final perseverance? How shall I rehearse for death? Jesus, I should like to die breathing out my soul in an act of love to Thee in the Blessed Sacrament. Master, before I go I wish to thank Thee for all the graces Thou hast given me through life. Forgive me for all my irreverences, insults, and sins. If I had my life to live over again I should try to be more thoughtful of Thee, more solicitous for Thy glory, more interested in Thy endeavours to sanctify my soul by the Sweet Sacrament! As a last favour, let me die with the favourite ejaculation on my lips, "Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!" It recalls the Sacred Heart, the source of all Thy affections, and it honours the Blessed Sacrament, the crystallization of all Thy wonders. Master, let me make this prayer my swan song, so that when my soul bids farewell to its mortal frame, the music of this loved prayer may speed it on its journey to eternity! Angel of God, be at my side at the last moment to whisper this ejaculation into my ear, that my last conscious act on earth may be one of Eucharistic homage.

"Perhaps I am not to die tonight. That means still another day to pass in this valley of tears. Angel! be on the alert when the sunbeams awake me in the morning; arrange the forces of my body so that my faculties will direct their first responsible moments to the tabernacle; that my first words will herald the day with the battle cry of 'Praised be the Most Blessed Sacrament'; that my first action after rising will be to prostrate myself in Eucharistic adoration. During the night, Angel, keep coming and going from my soul to the altar. Adore Jesus for me, then hurry back in case the forces of evil should be plotting my ruin."

If we are still thinking, and toss restlessly from side to side, let us not forget the poor souls in Purgatory, who are slowly and painfully expiating their sins. How they suffer! How they long for their entrance into Heaven! Perhaps their long imprisonment is due to their lack of love of God in the Eucharist. Because they were wanting in appreciation of the Blessed Sacrament they fell into temptation; they gave way to sin, and now they are receiving their punishment. It is too late for them to mend their conduct, but their fate, while serving as an example to us, should lead us to plead with the Judge of the altar for their speedy release. If we could but live out of love for Christ in the Eucharist, our deeds, meritorious and perfumed with the Master's breath, would shorten our stay in prison and entitle us to greater glory in His Home. We shall then learn from the imprudence of these poor prisoners who have passed the threshold of time, to appreciate better the gifts of the altar, and in thanksgiving for the lesson, we shall begin to repay them even now. We shall offer many indulgenced prayers on behalf of these suffering souls. "Jesus, listen to our aspirations! They are indulgenced by Thy Spouse, Holy Mother Church. We offer them in behalf of the victims of Thy justice the souls who atone for their misdeeds in Purgatory." Perhaps we can release a soul before we fall to sleep. "Master, I pray Thee, accept this loving ejaculation, 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph!' (seven years' indulgence). O Tabernacle Judge, apply the indulgence to the soul nearest the gates. Surely that soul does not need to remain long a prisoner. Master, let this, our prayer, be its ransom; let this soul pass tonight to Heaven."

We are all but asleep. Numbness begins to deaden our limbs and our consciousness is all but gone. All our body relaxes, but in our mind a faint glimmer of consciousness remains. "Art Thou listening, Jesus? I love Thee. 'Praised be the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament!'" A twist, a turn, a subdued sigh—and then slowly, gradually, we drift off into sleep; and the faithful angel, doing vigil at our side, is witness to the fact that our last voluntary act was one of love to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.



Part II The Communion of Children



CHAPTER XVIII

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

I N THE year 1910, a Decree was issued at Rome that was destined to modify profoundly the regulations concerning the administration of Holy Communion to young children. Prior to this date the child who was privileged to make its First Communion at a tender age, was regarded not only as precocious, but as most extraordinary. But when the teaching and legislation of the "Quam Singulari" appeared, the true Catholic spirit of our people showed itself, and the Decree received a most enthusiastic reception. Forthwith, bishops, priests, religious, and parents all over the world, set to work to execute the zealous wishes of the Holy Father, so that the First Communions of that year were more numerous than those of decades before, and presented some of the most edifying and touching scenes ever witnessed in the Catholic Church. We have long since become accustomed to this attitude; so much so that we are tempted to wonder whether familiarity has not been already responsible for the appearance of personal views, slightly at variance with the simple, straightforward rules of the Church. In order to understand the doctrine of the Church in all its purity and integrity, let us

NOTE—The first four chapters on "The Communion of Children" were expressly written for Emmanuel, the Review for Priests conducted by the Fathers of the Blessed Sacrament. The fifth chapter was added as the book was going to press.

make the Decree on First Communion the object of a little study.

We begin by recalling a few commonplace notions on the position of the Church in the domain of dogma and administration of the sacraments. Christ left to His pastors authority to teach in His Name, to interpret His Scriptures, and to lead men to Heaven. This entailed the additional commission of formulating wise laws for the direction and guidance of the people. If the Church, then, became heir to legislative powers, she also received the concomitant authority to interpret her own laws and to see to their execution by all means, even coercive. Failure to believe the teaching of the Church, or disobedience to her serious laws, passed by virtue of the Divine Commission of the Master, constituted matter for grievous sin.

Now this authority was peculiarly necessary in the doctrine and administration of the sacraments. The sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace that Christ intended to flow into our souls. Given the Divine Foundation, and obedience to the essential wishes of the Master, the Church has authority in all affairs relating to the sacraments, in such manner that if her injunctions are not faithfully observed, not merely the licitness, but the very validity of the sacraments is endangered. No matter how good, how praiseworthy, may be the motives, if the teaching of the Church on the matter be not believed and her rules observed, then what is thought,

in many instances, to be a sacrament, is not a sacrament at all.

We ask now, if, in all points, we are loyal to the wishes of Rome in the questions of Communion for our children. Before the "Quam Singulari" came into force, many deplorable errors were in vogue; thus among other disputed points, grave discrepancy existed regarding the age, the knowledge, and the piety necessary for First Communion. When Rome spoke, all these errors were discarded. The saintly Pontiff, Pius X, reminded Catholics that Communion was to be given the child at the age of reason; that is, as soon as it was capable of committing sin, and this, to fortify the child's soul with the grace of the interior life, to give it the help necessary to avoid serious sin; to overcome daily faults, and to make rapid advance in virtue.

The teaching of the Church was clear, loud, and imperious—"Save the growing child by means of Holy Communion." At that time personal opinions, years of contrary custom, disinclination to innovations, seemed to perish in the general flood consequent upon the launching of the Decree. We say "seemed to perish," for it would look as if, in some cases, contrary views were only temporarily submerged, for now they are beginning to reappear on the surface, under other forms, if you will, for the personal element does not question the main fact of the Decree—namely, "Communion at the age of reason"—but what it does is to sponsor views slightly

more advanced or more rigorous than those held by the Church.

Sometimes we are of the opinion that we contribute to the glory of God by admitting any and every child to Holy Communion. We would fill our churches to overcrowding with the young innocents and thus procure the glory of God in the greatest possible measure. But supposing, just for a moment, that in so doing we should violate one of the fundamental laws of the Church, would we really in this case procure the glory of God? Our action might appear to be zealous, to be based on considerations of the purest zeal and obedience, yet if we were evidently out of harmony with the spirit of the Church, it would be preferable to leave such undertakings undone. Subjectively speaking, our doings might be apostolic, but from any objective point of view, the law of the Church would be broken.

There is, moreover, another fear in connection with those apparently trivial departures from strict canonical rules, and this is, that once having left orthodox doctrine and practise, we are apt to drift a considerable distance into error. Thus, by pretending to overlook the defects of a certain child preparing for Holy Communion, we might gradually be led to adopt the same leniency in dealing with many others, with the consequence that what was regarded in the beginning as an exception, in the end becomes the rule. From this argument alone, we

can see the undesirable effects of not paying the strictest attention to the requirements of the Church in the reception of First Communion.

Again, the Church did not act rashly, nor without mature deliberation in the promulgation of her laws relating to Holy Communion. Those doctrinal Decrees emanating from the Roman Curia are the fruit of long and serious study. Eminent theologians are consulted, bishops are invited to express their opinion, the Holy Spirit is invoked, and only after every natural and supernatural means has been exhausted does the Decree become permanent and issue forth as the final decision and teaching of the Infallible Church of Christ. Not only does the solicitude of the Church embrace the principal teaching itself, but it also extends to the very wording of the document, so that every phrase of the final text has to be carefully weighed and pondered before it is given to the world. Hence it is that those Roman Decrees are monuments of what may be termed scientific theology and literary conciseness. Our conclusion, then, is that the Decree on First Communion was accompanied by the habitual wisdom and prudence of the Church. If, therefore, we wish to have orthodox principles concerning the administration of the First Holy Communion; if we want to follow the correct and only forms for admitting or rejecting prospective applicants, we must make the words of the Decree the object of conscientious and serious study.

In order to facilitate our investigations, we append herewith the principal rules laid down by the "Quam Singulari":

"Norm for Admitting Childen to First Communion.

To be observed everywhere:

- "1. The age of discretion required both for Confession and Communion is the time when the child begins to reason, that is about the seventh year, more or less. From this time on, the obligation of satisfying the precept of both Confession and Communion begins.
- "2. Both for First Confession and First Communion a complete and perfect knowledge of Christian Doctrine is not necessary. The child will, however, be obliged to learn gradually the whole Catechism according to its ability.
- "3. The knowledge of Christian Doctrine required in children in order to be properly prepared for First Holy Communion is that they understand according to their capacity those mysteries of Faith which are necessary as a means of salvation; that they be able to distinguish the Eucharist from common and material bread, and also approach the Sacred Table with the devotion becoming their age.
- "4. The obligation of the precept of Confession and Communion, which rests upon the children, falls back principally upon those in whose care they are; that is, parents, confessors, teachers, and pastors. It belongs to the father, however, or to the

person taking his place, as also to the confessor, as the Roman Catechism declares, to admit the child to First Holy Communion.

"5. The pastor shall take care to announce and hold a General Communion for children once or several times a year, and on these occasions shall admit not only First Communicants, but also others who, with the . . . "

In confirmation of the above rules we add the more recent declarations of the Church, as found in the New Canon Law:

Can. 854—"Children who, on account of their age, have not the knowledge and desire for this Sacrament, should not be given Holy Communion.

"In case of danger of death Holy Communion may be given to young children, if they know how to distinguish the Holy Eucharist from ordinary bread and reverently adore it.

"Outside the case of danger of death, a deeper knowledge of Christian Doctrine and a more accurate preparation are justly demanded, to an extent that they know at least the mysteries of Faith necessary as an absolute means of salvation, and that they approach Holy Communion with such devotion as can be expected from young children.

"The judgment of the sufficient disposition of children for First Holy Communion shall rest with the confessor of the children and their parents. The pastor has the duty to watch that the children do not approach Holy Communion before they have come to the age of reason, and have sufficient knowledge, wherefore he has the right to examine the children. It is the pastor's duty to see that the children who have attained the years of discretion and have sufficient instruction, are as soon as possible strengthened by this Divine Food."

In these rulings of the Roman Curia, everything relating to the First and other Communions is most clearly and decisively treated. There is no room left for personal opinion. All the requirements for the First Communion, the age, the knowledge, the piety, and frequency of reception are laid down. Children must make their First Communion when they come to the age of reason. They need but an elementary knowledge of their Faith, discernment of the Eucharist, and piety commensurate with their years. Priests, parents, and others in charge, are made responsible for preparing the young for First Holy Communion, and they are also under the obligation of urging their charges to frequent the Holy Table.

Our duty is made clear by the Decree—we must obey to the letter. No matter what we may think, no matter how zealous are our intentions, we cannot be more lenient nor more rigorous than the Church. Consequently, if we demand less than the Church demands for the First Communion, we are at fault; if we exact more, we are equally at fault; and if we fail to promote frequent Communion, we

THE TEACHING OF THE CHURCH 209

must plead guilty of disobedience to the wishes of the Church.

Rightly or wrongly, we are of the opinion that some, at least, are falling into the extremes mentioned. We shall endeavour, therefore, in subsequent articles to awaken attention to the danger of immature Communions, retarded Communions, closing with papers on the Frequency of Confession and Communion and Thanksgiving after Communion.

CHAPTER XIX

IMMATURE COMMUNIONS

THE age of discretion required both for Confession and Communion is the time when the child begins to reason; that is, about the seventh year, more or less"—so determines the Decree. "Children who, on account of their age, have not yet the knowledge and desire for this Sacrament, should not be given Holy Communion"—so says the new Code. Wherefore, we conclude that to induce on principle children between the ages of five and six to make their First Communion, is openly to violate the laws of the Church.

Bearing in mind our preceding argument on the prudence and carefulness of the Church in framing doctrinal Decrees, we say that the average age for First Communion is seven years. In determining such a pivotal age, one year would make vast difference. In the question of marriage, for instance, it simply results in nullifying the effect of the marriage; so also here, although less mathematically, one year more or less was to be a great deal. Think of the consequences: Upon the decision of the Church depended whether or not, throughout the world, hundreds of thousands of children, were to make their First Communion; whether or not millions of Communions could be given to them during a whole year. Even a half year, in this matter,

would have meant an incalculable amount of grace apparently lost. Now, can any sane Catholic accuse the Church of having rashly selected the age of seven when she should have selected six? No, certainly not. When the Church said seven, she meant seven. Of course, possible exceptions were foreseen and provided for in the saving clause, "more or less," but the general age was to remain seven.

It cannot be adduced that the legislators did not take into consideration the particular aptitude of children of our climes for a premature perception of the Holy Eucharist, as the nature of children is fairly identical the world over, from the glaciers of Iceland to the tropics of South America. Indeed, one would have thought that in the heart of Italy, where the congenial climate contributes to engender the vivacious temperament of the inhabitants, premature development of reason would be more likely than in the frigid zones, and in consequence, the age limit for First Communion would be advanced. In Italy, as in the rest of the world, seven was to be the age for First Communion.

Thus it is that the new Code firmly states that "Children who, on account of their age, have not yet the knowledge and desire for this Sacrament, should not be given Holy Communion." In the historical sketch preluding the different Canons on First Communion, the Church does not conceal the fact that in the early days Communion was given to sucklings; but then she likewise affirms that this

custom has been abrogated, so that it is not longer permissible, through fear of irreverence, to give the Body of the Lord to infants. To protect the august Sacrament of the Eucharist from every shadow of irreverence, the Church now demands that the recipient of Holy Communion be clothed in the wedding garments of knowledge and desire for the Body of the Lord. Hence, "Children who, on account of their age, have not yet the knowledge or desire, etc." Here, ignorance and lack of desire are mentioned as the principal reasons for withholding from children Holy Communion. In fact, children who have not attained the proper age cannot be expected to be informed concerning this Sacrament, or to manifest piety toward it. Wherefore tenderness of age is the basic reason for the lack of the proper dispositions on the part of children for the reception of Holy Communion.

We must notice, in addition, that the Eucharist is one of those Sacraments which should be voluntarily received if we wish to carry out the intentions of Its Divine Founder, Who desires to sanctify us through the medium of our own acquiescence and coöperation. As the Eucharist floods the soul with countless graces, it is only right to demand coöperation on the part of the receiver; wherefore, the young candidate, before being admitted to the Holy Table, must know Who is coming and how He is coming.

If, now, the child has but a memorized knowl-

edge of the Blessed Sacrament, that is, a readiness to answer questions relative to the Eucharist, without clearly perceiving What and Whom he is about to receive, can we safely assert that he has a true knowledge? Children can learn a certain amount of doctrine before they attain the use of reason. Thus, by constant repetition the child can learn enough about the Holy Eucharist to be able to pass a superficial examination on this matter, but this does not infallibly indicate the use of reason. Such answers can be purely mechanical, parrotlike. The Catechism of the Council of Trent teaches that we discern the Body of the Lord when we firmly believe in the Presence of the Body and Blood of the Lord Whom the angels adore in Heaven, at Whose word the columns of the Heavens tremble, and Whose glory fills Heaven and earth.

The Decree provides for possible exceptions, for a great number can be included under the word "less." It is unquestionable that God illumines the minds of many children so that they can discern the Body of the Lord at a very tender age, but then, the exceptions do not make the rule. The writer knew a child of four who was a frequent Communicant. But who would be rash enough to say all children of four are prepared to receive Communion? Because Christ graciously deigns to accord this favour to a few children, less favoured ones cannot claim the same privilege.

If one child, at the age of five, be able to dis-

cern the Body of the Lord, and be permitted to receive Him, other children must, nevertheless, wait in patience until the ordinary time. We like to see the young lambs approach the pastures of the Good Shepherd, but if the Shepherd says, "No, not yet," how may we force an opening? Nowadays, many children of five and six are, to a certain extent, precocious, but do they clearly discern the Body of the Lord? Do they realize the difference between good and evil? If not, then let them wait until a more opportune time. Consider the prudence of the Church in her dealings with neophytes. Overanxious Apostles would have liked to admit such converts as soon as possible to the strengthening Table of the Lord. Not so the Church who carefully tested the neophytes during months of probation before she opened to them the portals of the sanctuary. So also in our day, the rank and file of the children must attain the age of seven years or thereabouts before being admitted to the banqueting Table of the King.

The glory of God does not suffer from this postponement. True glory must ever be conformable to positive law, so that if it is not the wish of the Church for children of five to receive Communion, God's honour will not suffer thereby. We can give greater glory to God by improving the dispositions and increasing the fervour of the other children who have already made their First Communion. The Master seemingly wasted His time during the thirty years of His hidden life, yet Almighty God received greater honour from those long years of silence and retirement than He would have received if Christ had evangelized the entire world. Let parents profit by the prolongation of the time to prepare in a more fitting manner the human tabernacle of their young offspring for the coming of the Saviour. The realization of the longer anticipated joy will be, when it does come, all the sweeter and an ampler reward for their obedient patience.

Another important point to be noted is the duty imposed upon pastors by the New Code of seeing that children do not approach Holy Communion until they have come to the use of reason, and until they have acquired sufficient knowledge of the Sacrament. From this duty arises the right of the pastor to examine the children. If, for judicious reasons, he decides that such and such a child has not yet begun to exercise the power of reason, or is not in possession of sufficient knowledge, his decision must be accepted as final. The mere fact of this decision attaches no stigma to the child. It is surely neither a sign of stupidity nor a proof of gross ignorance that a very little child is not yet able to exercise his prerogative of reason. Of course, Catholic parents like to see their little angels feasting on the Food of God, but no true Catholic would grieve Our Lord by presenting candidates not yet entitled to the honour. Consequently, we cannot conceive of a loval Catholic threatening to transfer his child

from the parochial to the public school, simply because the priest has not given permission to the child to make his Communion that year with the others. True Catholicity is always accompanied by respect for the priesthood and obedience to Ecclesiastical authority.

The crux of the whole question is in the capability of commiting sin. Christ wished His Sacrament to be an antidote against sin. The soul needs Christ when it begins to suffer the attacks of the archenemy. If, from the very inception of this fearful power, a child can abuse the precious gift of liberty to offend his Creator, his soul should be provided with the invaluable protection of Holy Communion. Does the child in question know what it is to tell a lie, to feel conscious of sin, to realize that he is guilty, that he has offended God? If so, he is at the age of reason, and should be prepared to receive the Divine Antidote. If, on the contrary, the child stares vacantly when you mention sin, if he does not seem in any way conscious of guilt, if he cannot be brought to recognize that he should express his sorrow to God, nor indeed to make a true supernatural act of attrition, in all these cases it must be concluded that such a child has not yet attained the age of reason, and his parents should thank God that the Baptismal robe of innocence is still immaculate. Let us not forget that this supernatural quality of attrition is necessary for the validity of absolution. A child may grieve from mere natural

motives without understanding the higher motives of sacramental sorrow.

The purpose of this article is not to decrease the number of Communions, but rather to draw attention to the wishes of the Church and to safeguard her authority. Our conclusion is that it is a mistake and contrary to theology and the positive law of the Church, to admit to Holy Communion in a body children between the ages of five and six. That a child may be admitted to Holy Communion at this age, he must give positive proof that he has attained the use of reason; in addition he must have the requisite knowledge and piety, as explained; whereas the simple fact of being seven years of age permits the average prepared candidate to receive Holy Communion.

CHAPTER XX

RETARDED COMMUNIONS

IN THE matter of First Communion it is possible to run counter to the wishes of the Church by being too rigorous in our views. If there was any error the Church desired to eradicate in all her recent First Communion declarations, it was surely the error by which the little ones were kept waiting so long for their First Communion. Theologians imbued with Jansenistic theories insisted upon an age, a knowledge of religion, and a degree of piety far beyond what was necessary. That a child had already come to the use of reason and was consequently exposed to the attacks of Satan, did not trouble these theorists; for them the Blessed Sacrament was a premium to be won only by the possessors of a respectable sum of years, a complete religious knowledge, and a little less than eminent piety. Realizing the great harm that was being done by these views, the Church categorically settled the matter once for all, determining that the age of reason, which is generally about seven years, was the opportune time for the growing child to benefit by the royal Sacrament of the Altar.

We have already discussed the question of age: If the child is old enough to permit sin to intrude upon the sacred domain of his conscience, then this child is radically capable of making his first Communion. We say "radically," because the mere use of reason is not all. The child must know at least a few of the mysteries of religion; he must be aware of the difference between the Eucharist and ordinary bread and he must have a certain amount of piety.

What is meant by knowledge of the mysteries of faith? Certainly not the knowledge required by the study of years. The Decree states: "They understand according to their capacity those mysteries of Faith which are necessary as a mean of salvation."1

- 1. The New Code subjoins: "They know at least the mysteries of Faith necessary as absolute means of salvation."2
- 2. According to theologians, the mysteries of Faith necessary, without doubt, as absolute means of salvation, are the existence of God and His prerogative as rewarder of good and punisher of evil. The teaching of St. Paul put an end to all disputes on this score: "But without faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him."3
- 3. All theologians agree, in consequence, that this truth is necessary to salvation by necessity of means, so that no one can enter Heaven unless he knows there is a God who will reward or punish

¹Quam Singulari—Canon 3. ²Code—Canon 854. ³Hebrew XI—6.

him according to his merits or demerits. Regarding the knowledge of the Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation, theologians range themselves under different banners; some declare that these two mysteries must be known, otherwise salvation is impossible; others claim that one can be saved without knowing that God is one in nature or three in person, or that God became man. If, however, we speak of necessity of precept there is no difficulty, for the Church obliges us all to become instructed as to the nature of God and our redemption through Jesus Christ. Descending now to practice, it really does not take long to instruct a child on the fundamental truths: viz., that there is a God Who knows all our acts, and Who will punish them if bad and reward them if good; and that the nature of this God is possessed by three Persons Who still make only one God; and that the Second of these Persons came into this world as a little babe, and afterward, as a man, suffered and died on the Cross to save us from sin. Then, as Confession is to precede Communion, the child will have to be given the elementary notions about sin and sorrow, and instructed as to how he should make his confession.

Following the axiom that we should not ask more than the Church asks, any child who is acquainted with the above facts is ready, as far as knowledge is concerned, for his First Communion. We are not directed by the Church to render obligatory the possession of other notions than these, and, conse-

quently, we are not permitted to debar from the Sacrament any child because he does not possess further knowledge. It is likewise faulty to make the examination of candidates so severe that if the children fail to answer in the words of the Catechism, or according to given formulas, they lose their chance for Communion. Many a child becomes flustered and nervous and incapable of answering satisfactorily at examinations although, under normal conditions, his knowledge is equal to that of his companions. Rather than expose the child to the ordeal of a strict examination, it would be preferable to gather the necessary information quietly and in an amicable manner; thus the child would be delighted to impart what he knows, and would not feel that he is being subjected to a grilling that may lead to his rejection.

Respecting the discernment of the Blessed Sacrament, the Decree states that the child must be able to distinguish the Eucharist from common and material bread.

Now, how far must we go before we can say that a certain child is able to distinguish the Eucharist from ordinary bread? At the outset we must remember that belief in the young reposes mainly upon what they are told by their elders. The God of Love may lead a few privileged ones to Himself by the way of sensible consolation in His Presence, but the rank and file of children are introduced to Christ hidden under the Sacramental Veils, by their

elders who tell them that He is there. By dint of repeating this assertion, by bringing the child often to Church, by having him genuflect to the Blessed Sacrament, by having him observe a respectful posture while in church, by counseling him to direct his prayer to God in the little house upon the altar, the child in the end takes it for granted that God really is there. How He can stay there, how He can be in two thousand places at the same time, what the relations are between Himself and the appearance of bread—these do not trouble the young disciple. The priest, the sister, the teacher, his parents, all his elders in whom he trusts have told him that Jesus is in that little white host and for him this becomes absolute truth. Jesus is in the tabernacle, and there is all the difference in the world between the Eucharist and material bread.

Some, however, base an objection upon the thoughtlessness and apparent irreverence of children. "These children," they say, "act most disrespectfully in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. They carry their scandalous behaviour to the very altar itself, and they even go so far as to rush out of the church immediately after receiving Holy Communion. Therefore, we may profit by these unfortunate examples to say that these new candidates lack the piety necessary to approach the Altar." In answer to these statements we say that thoughtfulness and forgetfulness are the inevitable associates of childhood. The child is awed

for a moment, really adores and loves His God, and the next instant bursts forth into childish glee at some amusing incident or saying. Have not many of us been edified by the faith of these little children? One pure act of love on their part more than compensates for their lack of material reverence to the Blessed Sacrament. Objectors tell us that they should not be permitted to carry their thoughtlessness to the very altar rail; we answer: If at the very moment of receiving Communion they are able to makes acts of faith and love, then Christ is delighted to have them come. He can make allowance for the imperfections of childhood, and He is prepared to defer to a later date the respect which will be the fruit of age and experience. There is sometimes more ardent love in these little culprits than in many an adult. A child who, when inadvertently passed by at the altar rail, sobs as if his little heart would break, gives a proof of affection for the Sacred Host that would make many an adult of advanced years sigh with envy.

A little one of our acquaintance, when reproached for having fallen asleep during her thanksgiving, naïvely replied that "she was sleepy and Jesus was sleepy, too." Let us not merit the rebuke addressed by Christ to the Apostles, who would have prevented the children from wasting the Master's time; "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God."

We do not say that all childish thoughtlessness or

acts of irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament are commendable, or that they should be passed over in silence. We must strive generously to lead the young ones gently to a more becoming piety; but when we are tempted to bar children from Holy Communion on account of their thoughtlessness and irreverence, let us not forget that we view such faults through the spectrum of age and experience—mature advantages to which the children have yet to be introduced.

On the strength of the above reasoning, we would be overstepping our right in refusing to pass children who, although having attained the age of reason, do not as yet measure up to our preconceived standard. We are not the proprietors of the sacraments. We are only the dispensers and ministers. God alone can claim the right of dominion over His spiritual treasures. The Church, the Spokesman of God, says that an elementary knowledge of the mysteries, and the devotion of which young children are capable, suffice for admission to Holy Communion. Wherefore, let us be content with the essentials, and feed the hungry soul of the child with the food for which it so ardently longs. Were we, contrary to the wishes of the Church, to dismiss a child without reason, we should become responsible to Almighty God for all the harm that might ensue. His nuptial garment does not meet with our wrongly conceived approval, but this will not prevent the devil from defiling the soul of the child with sin.

Another point worthy of remark is this: children are expected to make their First Communion as soon as possible after coming to the use of reason. The new Code reads:

"It is the pastor's duty to see to it that the children who have attained the years of discretion, and have sufficient instruction, are, as soon as possible, strengthened by this Divine Food." (Can. 854.)

Therefore, it is a mistake to delay for a whole year a child who, at the time of the annual general Communion, was for good reasons deemed unworthy to communicate.

It cannot be denied that we act wisely in retarding certain children on account of their lack of discretion and knowledge; but these are inconveniences that disappear with time, and perhaps within a very short while after the General Communion. Are we, then, to defer the Communion of such children for eight full months? Try to conceive all the graces their souls will lose by these omitted Communions! How many of us should like to answer to God for the loss of all these treasures? The gravity of the matter is augmented by the possibility of these souls being contaminated by sin. For eight full months these little ones will still be exposed to the attacks of Satan without possessing the strengthening power of the Sacraments; they will be able to commit sin and in danger of committing sin; and if in these days the seeds of evil

are sown in the garden of their souls, whom will the Judge, the Great Lover of children, hold guilty?

The making of the First Communion privately does not interfere with the General Communion. The Decree "Quam Singulari" says:

"Pastors shall take care to announce and hold a General Communion once or several times a year, and on these occasions they shall admit not only First Communicants, but also others who, with the consent of their parents and the confessor, have been admitted to the Sacred Table before." (Can. 5.)

This Canon clearly sanctions the making of First Communions privately during the year, and at the same time renders obligatory the General Communion. These General Communions produce a very salutary effect, preaching, as they do, the dignity and excellence of Holy Communion, and instilling respect and appreciation of the Sacrament into the hearts of the juvenile communicants. Have not many of us, while witnessing the touching sight of Jesus first coming into an innocent soul, thanked God from our heart for the great gift of Faith.

The responsibility of having the children come to Holy Communion falls, as the Decree states, "principally upon those in whose care they are, that is, upon parents, confessors, teachers, and pastor" hence, parents sin grievously if they refuse to allow their child to make his Communion when they have been assured by the priest that he is ready. Not only do parents sin by refusing to grant this

permission, they also sin if they neglect to send, of their own accord, their child whom they know to be ready. This last obligation arises from the fact that the new Code makes them co-judges with the Confessor of the preparedness of the child.

"The judgment of the sufficient disposition of children for First Communion shall rest with the Confessor of the children and their parents, or those who take the place of their parents." (Can. 854.)

From this it is evident that upon the parents as co-judges with the priest, devolves the double duty of judging when their child is fit to receive his First Holy Communion, and of sending him, when they have so judged. They sin when they know their child is ready, but refuse to have him make his First Communion. Parents who are thus responsible for the omission of the Paschal Communion by their child are just as guilty as if they omitted their own Easter duty, with the consequence that until they withdraw their opposition, they are unworthy to receive absolution.

CHAPTER XXI

FREQUENT COMMUNION

OYALTY to Mother Church demands that good Catholics observe not only strict precepts, but also urgent counsels. The Church obliges, under pain of sin, all who are in charge of children, to see that they comply with the Paschal precepts. She strongly counsels that every endeavour be made to have the little ones approach the Holy Table frequently:

"They who have the care of children shall use all diligence in seeing that after their First Communion the children often approach the Holy Table, even daily if possible, as Jesus Christ and Mother Church desire."*

The obedience of Catholics to the legislation on Paschal Communion was truly splendid and still continues to be most impressive, but can we say the same about the counsel of urging the children to go frequently to Communion? In many places there is certainly no reason for complaint—the children go frequently. But this is not true of all places: and not being true, we claim that the fault is not with the children, but with those in whose care they are. Note the wording of the Decree:

"The obligation of the precept of Confession and Communion falls back principally upon those in whose care they are." (Can. 4.)

^{*} Quam Singulari-Can. 6.

And again:

"Those who have the care of children shall use all diligence in seeing that after their First Communion the children often approach the Holy Table." (Can. 6.)

Is it not evident from these two passages that compliance with the counsel of frequent Communion among children depends principally upon the guardians, both temporal and spiritual, of the children? Why this? Because children of tender years are too young to realize the importance, the value of frequent Communion; so, wishing to have them share in, and profit by, the treasures of the Altar, the Church looks to those who, before God, are charged with the responsibility of their rearing.

The realization of the value of an immortal soul, of the sublime destiny to which it is called, of the dangers besetting it here on earth, of the need of a spiritual nourishment for it, and an appreciation of Holy Communion as the best nourishment—these are things that come with experience, reflection, and maturity of years. We tell the little child that the Pope wishes him to receive Holy Communion frequently. The little one listens respectfully, and at the time admits the truth of our remark, but being too young to discern the advantages of frequent Communion, he is unable to grasp the full import of the message, soon forgets it, and fails to respond to the invitation.

Now, we ask: do we act rationally in permitting

a child to have its own way in regard to Holy Communion? We certainly do not act as loyal Catholics. True obedience to the Church would make us diligent in seeing that the little ones approach Holy Communion frequently. The expression "all diligence" means a great deal. It means that the priest, the teacher, and the parents should be untiring in their endeavours to bring about frequent Communion. It means an energetic, sincere, and constant effort in the matter. It means the use of every legitimate weapon of nature and of grace, the employment of explanation, exemplification, counsel, entreaty, and prayer. A mere perfunctory reminder to the child that he is expected to become a frequent Communicant does not fulfil the injunction implied in "all diligence." Only whole-hearted, sustained effort can satisfy the requirements of the Decree.

It is strange that we do not follow the same rules in the order of grace as in the order of nature. If a child failed to take proper nourishment, purposely omitted its meals, denied itself sufficient sleep, how many of us would allow such omissions to go unchecked and become habitual?

We would not, of course, be too harsh with the child; youth and inexperience would be sufficient excuse. Nevertheless, realizing the harm being done, we would gently, but firmly, insist on having our wishes observed. If the little one still continued to follow its erroneous views, we would not become

discouraged and abandon our intentions; on the contrary, we would redouble our efforts. That the child complained of our interference, or grumbled at not being allowed to follow its own will, would not in any manner weaken our resolution to preserve its bodily health. Also ignorance, apathy, and indifference on the part of the child would only prove so many incentives to our zeal for its welfare.

This policy of having children follow the advice of their elders in matters pertaining to bodily health should be imitated in looking after their souls—due respect, of course, being had for voluntary action. It is easy to understand why children forget the advice of the Holy Father concerning frequent Communion; it is easy, likewise, for children to grow up ignorant of, and, to a certain extent, indifferent to, the benefits of Communion; but all this should not deter us from inducing them by every means possible to do what is right.

For this reason we should have at our command a supply of arguments by which we can at all times show the advantages, the necessity, the consolations of frequent Communion. We should be prepared to answer any objections a child could make on the subject; while in season and out of season, our constant theme should be:

"Frequent Communion is our greatest help in growing up in the fear and love of God and in the right observance of His Law."

Let children complain, if they like, that we do not

permit them to follow their own way. In later years, they will recall with earnest gratitude, our solicitude for their welfare, and will thank us for our trouble.

Our advice on frequent Communion will very probably meet with no success unless we facilitate the approach of the children to the Holy Table. An excellent expedient is to conduct the children in a body to Confession. This almost invariably means a Communion the following morning. When children are led in a body every week or every fortnight to Confession, every week or every fortnight the vast majority of that body of children will receive Holy Communion.

Experience has proved that this is one of the best means of inducing the children of a school or a parish to cultivate the habit of at least weekly Communion. Even though the little ones murmur about the quasi obligatory character of this confession—which should not be so strictly imposed as to prevent an obstinate child from having its own way -still being docile, after a momentary reluctance, they easily consent, and when Confession time arrives, they enter heart and soul into the task of receiving the Sacrament of Penance. As the Communions of the following morning will be entirely voluntary, we need not fear that they will be sacrilegious. In reference to this, teachers or parents should never scold or punish a child for omitting a Communion. In fact, for those weekly Communions, it would be far better to overlook any omissions, trusting that the example of the majority will induce such a child to avoid losing his Communion.

We cannot overestimate the value of these special "made-in-a-body" confessions for children. How is it that in convent schools and colleges, large numbers of the students are trained in the habit of frequent Communion? Simply because it is understood that Confessions are heard every week, and all are expected to attend. This Confession invariably ensures at least one Communion every week, and in many cases several others. Why should the beneficent effects of such a procedure be restricted to boarding schools and convents? Why should not other children, less favoured as to temporal advantages, be provided in a similar way with the help the sacraments afford? Let us, then, bring the children to Confession in a body every week or fortnight. Let us have those school-children Confessions for them only, and it will not be long before God's blessings will descend in abundant showers upon home, school, and parish. If the school be parochial, it will be an easy matter to arrange the Confession during any school time that suits the convenience of the teachers; if the school be public, the teachers or other apostolic lay-workers will conduct the children to Confession.

For public schools, Friday afternoon would seem to be the best time for the children's Confession as the Communion of the morrow can then take place without interfering with schoolwork. Experience has shown that the regular Saturday afternoon confessions do not draw large bodies of children. To succeed with weekly Communion for children, we should have a special Confession time for them during, or immediately after, school hours.

This practise has the additional good result of procuring a General Communion once a week for the children. At this Communion those in charge can train the little ones to make their preparation for, and their thanksgiving after Communion. To relieve the strain, some of the many beautiful Communion hymns should be sung. The prayers, on these occasions, should be recited aloud by all the children. The beautiful verses in Mother Loyola's Children's Charter may also be used to advantage. Then, at the end, all may join in the recitation of the indulgenced "En Ego." It can be seen at a glance that these weekly General Communions of the children offer exceptional opportunities for enlisting the help of these innocents in the way of obtaining prayers for parochial needs. There should be no difficulty in inaugurating this special weekly Communion for children. We have all come to regard the First Friday Communions as an established fact. Why not follow the same method in regard to weekly Communions? Indeed, given the Papal injunction "to use all diligence," we cannot see how special Confessions and Communions may be omitted.

So much for the weekly Communion. What must be done to obtain more frequent, even daily Communion? The task no doubt is more difficult. Still the objective has been set up for us by the Pope: ". . . even daily, if possible, as Jesus Christ and Mother Church desire." Our duty, then, is quite clear. We must endeavour to realize this desire of Christ and the Church. It may be stated as a safe principle that no one can become a successful apostle of daily Communion until he himself be filled with a love for daily Communion. Children are quick to recognize the difference between preaching and practise, and when example does not accompany the teaching, the lesson is quickly lost. Let those who set out to find daily juvenile Communicants, become filled with an ardent love for the morning Banquet; let them realize in their own lives the value of that daily embrace with God; let them come to regard the loss of a single Communion as the greatest misfortune of the day. Given such convictions, it will not be too arduous a task to persuade a few, at least, of the children to make the necessary sacrifices in order to come on week-day mornings to Holy Communion. Where sacrifice is concerned, it is very easy to follow the line of least resistance. Thus we surrender far too readily to children when they plead early rising, ill-health, inclement weather, as excuses for not going to Communion. No doubt, a good many of these excuses are, for some, well founded on fact; but it is not always so for the majority. Viewed from a mere

natural standpoint, it does seem imprudent to counsel a growing child to curtail its usual sleep and come fasting in all weathers to Church, to a devotion that is not obligatory; but if we adjust our lenses to the supernatural perspective, then those Communions of supererogation appear in an entirely different light. What temporal benefits can be compared to the privilege of receiving the real Body and Blood of Jesus Christ? Surely the Sacrifice of sleep, comfort, and convenience is amply repaid by the priceless favour of receiving the Food of Angels. Which shall give greater consolation to a parent on the day of judgment—the thought that the child has been humoured during its early life in regard to sleep, food, and care, or that he has received hundreds of Communions, purchased at the cost of much persuasion, perseverance, and good example? Sleep is necessary for children; yes, but early retiring can lead to early rising. It is disagreeable to come to church fasting; yes, but an injury of incalculably greater harm is done to the soul of the child, if, by the loss of these Communions, he falls into serious sins. And though it be agreeable to enjoy sensual comforts on earth, it is much better to prepare for oneself, and to enjoy, greater spiritual happiness in Heaven. If the child can tell Christ Himself that he is unable to come to daily Communion, then his excuse is valid; but, if not, true love for God should bring him to the Holy Table. That love should be fostered and encouraged.

The formation of bands whose members promise a certain number of Communions every week, the making of spiritual bouquets, the cultivation of the habit of receiving Communion every day during the months of the Sacred Heart, of Our Lady, and St. Joseph; during Lent and Advent, and on the feasts of favourite saints, all these are practises which will contribute greatly to the desired end—daily Communion for children.

A final question before we conclude: "Does all the above mean that extra burdens are to be placed on the shoulders of our already overworked priests?" We think not. Certainly the mere distribution of Holy Communion will not mean a task of extraordinary magnitude. The main difficulty arises quite naturally from the increased number of Confessions. These, we think, can be so arranged that the burden will not be unreasonable. All priests having care of souls are bound in justice to hear the Confessions of their parishioners when they reasonably ask it. We take it for granted that if a person be in mortal sin and asks at an inopportune time, it is reasonable for a priest to accede to his wish. But in the case of children who, thank God, are as yet young and innocent, how often should they come to Confession in order to go often to Holy Communion? In another part of this article we said it was advisable to have children come every week in a body to Confession. Does this mean that every child in the parish should come every week to Confession? Not necessarily. In fact, in large parishes it is more advisable to have young children come but once a fortnight; otherwise, owing to the large crowds of children, the priests are obliged through sheer necessity to dispatch these Confessions in haste, which is hardly ideal. A safe rule for Confession is that given as a condition for gaining indulgences. Canon 931 of the New Code says:

"The Faithful who are in the habit of confessing at least twice a month, unless legitimately impeded, or who receive Holy Communion daily in the state of grace, and with a good and holy intention, though they may abstain once or twice a week, can gain all the indulgences without actual Confession for which otherwise confessing would be a necessary condition."

We presume the type of Catholic desired by Mother Church is the one who is anxious to gain indulgences; whence the advice to confess "twice a month" may be followed with the utmost safety. If, therefore, the young children be divided into two groups, the first going one week and the other group the second week, the task of hearing their Confessions will be considerably alleviated.

Parents and teachers should form the consciences of the children in such a way as to make them understand that, given a state of grace and a right intention, they may receive Holy Communion on any day. The average child does not commit mortal sins as often as it is thought. And although ordinary

acts of disobedience, lies, petty thefts, are sins, and therefore displeasing to God, and subject to punishment, nevertheless in the vast majority of cases, they are not mortal, and consequently are not obstacles to the reception of Communion. Priests often find that young children needlessly miss Communion because they have inadvertently uttered a profane word in the hearing of their parents, who then take it upon themselves to forbid the child to go to Holy Communion. Little ones have learned to think that they should not go to Communion when they have said "bad words" or told a liethis because their consciences have not been formed regarding the true notion of mortal sin, which demands grave matter, knowledge, and intention. Great harm is caused to souls of children by the lack of proper religious education, and this shows the necessity of the Sunday School. Children themselves should be taught to become apostles among their own playmates in this wise, that they may persuade their delinquent friends to come to Catechism.

When children come in a body to Confession but twice a month, it is recommended that the division that has not gone to Confession during the current week, take part in some special exercise, in order to have impressed upon them the fact that they are expected to present themselves for Communion on the morrow. This is important if we wish to get the children to come to Communion when they have not been to Confession the preceding day. Ex-

perience shows that the majority of children couple Communion with Confession, so that, unless we devise another method, such as special prayer for bringing them to the Church, we are apt to be disappointed in the Communions. It goes without saying that, as larger pupils need more attention, no obstacle should be placed in the way of their weekly Confession.

In conclusion, we venture to hope that if the above rules be carried out, the majority of the children of the parish will become weekly, and a goodly number, daily communicants, thus drawing down untold blessings upon themselves, their homes, and the parish in general. By facilitating the approach of children to Confession, by having special weekly Confessions for them only, by persuading them to come in a body to these Confessions, and by making frequent Communion our favourite topic with the young, by doing all these we shall, in truth, observe "all diligence" in promoting frequent Communion, and thus contribute in a most substantial manner to the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER XXII

THANKSGIVING AFTER COMMUNION

A TREATISE on Communion for children would be incomplete without a few considerations on a child's thanksgiving after Holy Communion. With the idea of bringing the little ones often to the Sacrament of the Altar predominating, it not infrequently happens that those giving instructions for First Communion will fail to stress sufficiently the need of the adequate thanksgiving after Holy Communion, or what is even more often the case, parents, teachers, and others having charge of children, will not, or at least do not, always persevere in attempting to make ideal the children's "thank you" to the Lord after the Eucharistic Banquet.

In all that has to do with children, we should not fail to discern the great value of good lessons well learned in the early days of life. A good habit well embedded in childhood will often endure until death. Who has not met men and women who have never been known to have told a deliberate lie? Trace the origin of this most commendable virtue to its source, and very often the explanation of the sterling regard for the truth, with the inseparable aversion for falsehood, will be found in the horror of the sin of lying instilled by a good, God-fearing mother.

The psychological cause of this virtuous habit is

found in the steadfast resolution not to offend God by a deliberate lie. There is no doubt that many times during that life career the supernatural had come to the assistance of the feeble strength of the human will, but that noble regard for the truth became so firmly interlocked with our friend's nature that no contrary act was placed and above all that no contrary habit was ever formed.

Applying the above example to the Communion training of the child, we claim that it is possible so to teach the doctrine of the presentable thanksgiving, that ever afterwards the child will be guided by its principles. We teach with all the energy at our command that Jesus at His Last Supper did change bread and wine into His Body and Blood; we show the children how the priests of the Catholic Church continue the privilege of the Apostles every time they celebrate the Holy Sacrifice—and children remember. Some even remember the little Communion verses they learned at their First Communion class. Now why should not children be taught to understand that thanksgiving after Communion is just as important as the preparation before Communion? Possibly the failure of many to stress sufficiently the nature and need of the thanksgiving is due to the chronological place of the thanksgiving instructions in the course on First Communion; in other words, so much time is taken up with reviewing the principal mysteries of religion, in narrating the scriptural story of the Last Supper, in explaining the nature of the Eucharist, together with all that has to be taught concerning Confession, that the thanksgiving lesson suffers the fate of the eleventh-hour victim, who receives consideration, indeed, but of a brief, hurried, and superficial kind.

It is also possible that a partial explanation of the lack of thoroughness in the thanksgiving lesson may be traced to the fact that the teacher is not so very careful himself or herself about returning adequate thanks to the Almighty for the grace of a Holy Communion. The old theological principle of *Nemo dat quod non habet*, "Nobody gives that which he does not have," can and may apply to the person now presiding over a First Communion class, who habitually hurries away from church in an amazingly short time after having received Holy Communion. Such offenders against Eucharistic etiquette will naturally treat very lightly the need of fairly lengthy thanksgivings.

Various reasons can be suggested to the children for thanksgiving after Communion. The Gift of God, the special greatness of this Gift, the form of the Gift, the infinite love, mercy, and kindness of God, the presence of the Giver and His Gift in our soul, the benefit to be derived from intimate converse with God, the living tabernacle of the soul, all these plead for presentable thanksgivings.

Mere courtesy to the Lord God Almighty demands that we manifest our appreciation of His continued presence in our souls after Holy Communion. His is no mere passing call, no mere formal salutation. He comes to remain with us until such time as the species retain their identity as species and consequently continue to support the accidents of bread. No matter where God may be, being present, He must be honoured, adored, and praised as God. Because God is in our heart after Holy Communion, He should receive the courtesy, consideration, and attention due to Him.

We can ask children what they would do were a great king or the president of a big country to come to their homes. Surely they could not just say "How do you do, very pleased to see you," and then completely ignore their distinguished guest. Jesus is the King of Kings. Angels adore Him wherever He is, with great reverence and fear. The least that Catholics can do after having received Him into their bodies is to remember that He is present and therefore, should be treated as God.

Christ comes to us in Holy Communion not only to give us grace and blessing, but also to favour us with the unsurpassed opportunity of speaking directly and immediately to Him. The privileges and honours of the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, St. John, the Prophet Simeon, and the other contemporaries of Christ are repeated and perpetuated through the ages by Holy Communion. Any person going to Holy Communion need not envy the Palestinian friends of Christ, since favours similar to those showered by the Saviour on His associates

during His sojourn on earth, are enjoyed by all communicants today. Therefore, to children we say: "Jesus comes to you so that you may talk to Him, tell Him the story of your love, ask Him to help you to be good, to overcome your bad habits of lying, stealing, being disobedient, and saying bad words." Children may be asked how long they continued speaking to Our Lord the last time they received Him in Holy Communion? What they said to Him? For whom they prayed?

A good method calculated to prolong thanksgiving after Holy Communion consists in dividing one's prayers into silent, book, and vocal prayers. For the silent period the child would be taught the habit of quiet introspective thought about Emmanuel, tasting the sweetness of the Angelic Food, silently adoring, praising, thanking, and loving God.

Let the children be formed to the habit of listening to God. Ask them, "Do you ever give Jesus a chance to speak to you? Do not do all the talking when Jesus comes to you in Holy Communion. Adore, praise, thank, love God, then keep quiet, and listen to Jesus speaking to you." This practise will form the children to the habit of recollection. It will foster the spirit of union with Our Lord, com-union, (communion), the perfect uniting of thought, mind, heart, will, and body of the creature with his Creator.

After the silent thanksgiving has taken place, one may have recourse to one's Prayer Book.

Following Mass with a Missal, the first prayers to be recited after Holy Communion are the Communion and Post Communion prayers of the Mass of the day. The ideal prayer for the Catholic is the liturgical prayer. If Holy Mother Church, with enlightenment and protection emanating from the abiding Spirit of Truth, advisedly formulated special prayers for the express purpose of thanking God through the merits of Christ as manifested in the event commemorated by the Feast of the day or through the intercession of the saint honoured on the anniversary, it necessarily follows that the thanksgiving prayers most welcomed by God the Father are the official prayers composed by Holy Mother Church.

After the priest has left the sanctuary the many beautiful prayers in the form of acts of faith, love, humility, adoration, thanksgiving, and petition as found in every good Prayer Book, make very profitable prayer readings after Holy Communion. For children, the prayers in the Simple Prayer Book of the Catholic Truth Society (England) can hardly be surpassed. High-school boys and girls, and all adults possessing a Missal, should be directed to recite the sublimely beautiful prayers ordered by the Church for the celebrant's thanksgiving. These are the Canticle of Daniel and the set of three prayers immediately following the Canticle in the Post Communion prayers. The prayers of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Bonaventure, with possibly

the addition of the translations of the *Adoro Te Devote* and the prayer of St. Ignatius, "Soul of Christ sanctify me," should satisfy the most enraptured of grateful communicants.

Every Communion should witness the recital of the plenary indulgenced prayer "En Ego" (Behold O Good and Sweet Jesus). Granting the greatest of her temporal-punishment releasing favours in the form of prayer to be recited after Holy Communion, Mother Church clearly indicates that it is her desire that we use this prayer after every one of our Holy Communions.

If time still permits, a third period of our thanksgiving can be used for vocal prayer. The first vocal prayers thus to be said are "Our Father," "Hail Mary," and "Glory be to the Father," for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff in order to gain the indulgences. Then we can mention by name the living persons for whom we pray, ask God for special favours, and plead for our relatives, benefactors, and friends who may be languishing in Purgatory.

In every Communion children should be taught to aim at obtaining an increase of a certain virtue and overcoming a special vice or weakness.

If they are inclined to be vain, haughty, and proud, let them adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as the God of Humility and of Meekness. If they are very often failing in obedience, let them receive Jesus as the Model Son. Lessons can also be given on ingratitude. The story of the nine ungrate-

ful lepers may be told with great profit, especially when care is taken to show that the non-thanking communicant repeats the ingratitude of the nine lepers who after having been cleansed from their leprosy, failed to return in order to give thanks to God. Children who regularly are ungrateful to Christ after Holy Communion will not always be appreciative of gifts and favours coming from parents and other benefactors.

The story of the good priest who sent two altar boys with lighted torches to accompany a man seen hurriedly rushing away from the church without pausing to give thanks after having received Holy Communion, will convey its salutary lesson. The man in question inquired as to the reason of the altar boys with the lights. "My son," replied the priest, "you are going away from the church without stopping to honour your God. I but did what you failed to do. Show suitable honour to Jesus Christ Whom you are bearing in your bosom."

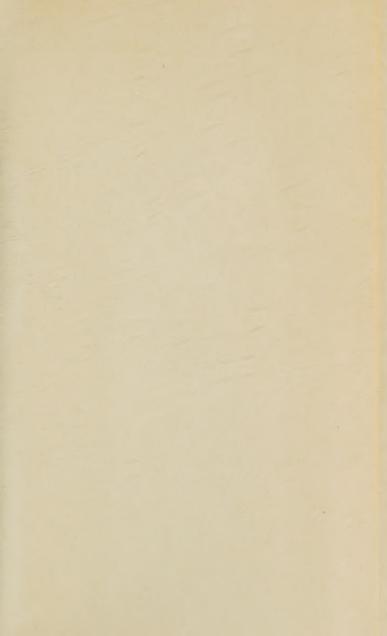
Objectors to frequent and daily Communion for children, if they be parents, may ask themselves if the apparent absence of good results expected from the frequent Communions of their children be not due to the very failure of the parents properly to instruct the children about a presentable thanksgiving. We say "apparent absence of good results," because in every Communion worthily received many substantial blessings are conferred. Let those who endeavour to perpetuate the act of the Apostles

striving to send children away from the Divine Lover of little ones, ask themselves the pointed question whether their own thanksgivings after Holy Communion are relatively superior to the thanksgiving of the small boys and girls whom they so unkindly condemn for running out of church immediately after Mass. The little ones run out of church, it is true, but they get up early with faith and love in their hearts; they brave the cold and the wind and the rain when many of their elders are still in bed; they pray all through Mass when the same critics are imitating cows and horses in their animal sleep; finally, the little ones run out of church, but they bear God in their hearts and they face the temptations of the day with Jesus Christ as their source of strength. Yes, the little ones, just because they are little and young, lack the maturity gained by age and experience, and thus do not fully understand the benefits of a long thanksgiving, run out of the church and return to the homes to find the enemies of their daily and frequent Communions still in bed. With whom is God better pleased? With those adults who, knowing better, absolutely refuse to go more often to Holy Communion, though Jesus wishes them to, or with the brave little children who come often to Holy Communion even though they do not stay long enough to thank Him? We are not defending the practise of hasty thanksgivings on the part of the young, we but ask the foregoing critics to

remember St. Paul's teaching, "When I was a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, I spoke as a child; but when I became a man, I put away the things of a child." Inversely, we are confident that if parents and instructors of children will take the trouble to use the methods outlined herein, especially when their instructions are supported by their own fervent example, the children will soon make more presentable thanksgivings.







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